**The Thesis Committee for Emily Jo Duda**
**Certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:**

# Sports and the City: The Rhetorical Construction of Civic Identity through American Football Teams

**APPROVED BY**
**SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:**

Paul C. Adams

William Doolittle

# Sports and the City: The Rhetorical Construction of Civic Identity through American Football Teams

**by**

**Emily Jo Duda, B.A.; B.A.; M.A.**

**Thesis**

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

**Master of Arts**

**The University of Texas at Austin**

**August, 2011**

# Dedication

To my beloved mother, Karen Duda – you are gone from this earth but you will always live in my heart and the hearts of all those who loved you. And to Pittsburgh – city of the confluence, city of bridges, city of champions, city that raised her, city that we loved.

# Acknowledgements

Thanks first and foremost to Paul – without his guidance I would never have completed this this. Thank you also to the people who helped me in my research – to my father, for coming with me to Pittsburgh in the dead of winter to see museums and libraries, to the docents and librarians at the Carnegie museums and libraries for all of their help, to my best friend Liz for going out of her way on our visit so that I could see Baltimore's sports museum. Thank you to Bill, who was there when Paul could not be, giving me feedback and motivation. And finally, thanks to my fellow cohort members, for providing emotional support as we slogged through the trenches together.

## Abstract

### Sports and the City: The Rhetorical Construction of Civic Identity through American Football Teams

Emily Jo Duda, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

Supervisor: Paul C. Adams

Sports fandoms can form a key site of identity formation, particularly as they gather and merge numerous threads of identity, including gender, socio-economic status, and civic affiliation. The connections formed between members of the fandom, the fandom and the team, and the fandom and the place in which it is grounded can be a strong force for social cohesion. This cohesion becomes particularly relevant during times of crisis, when some turn to sports as a unifier. However, these relationships can also be fraught with tensions, within the group and without. Forces such as nostalgia and the 'othering' of those outside the group become import methods in creating and sustaining these Andersonian "imaginary communities" of fans, mitigating difference. In examining this process of identity creation, two cities were chosen for their intense team attachments: Pittsburgh and Baltimore. Qualitative analysis of discourses surrounding the teams in these cities reveals the complex ways in which nostalgic fantasies about the team and its relationship to the city are created and maintained, hierarchies of space and time are formed, and the identity of the community is shaped by its relationship to team

and city. Analysis of the sporting landscape, created through a complex network of material culture, media, and the repetition of certain fantasy themes, reveals how geography is complexly implicated in the production of sporting fandom.

.

# Table of Contents

## List of Illustrations

# Place and Community Identity in Sports

Football has become a multi-billion dollar enterprise in the United States, the growth of which has been facilitated in part by forms of media that bridge the gap between physical, geographical experiences of sport (i.e. being in a city or stadium, interacting with other fans) and a diffuse, geographically disparate fandom. In many ways, however, despite the wide media coverage of the sport, football teams remain highly connected to the identity of a city. Those identities can perform in particular ways when the cities that the teams are connected with experience some manner of crisis, as the team may be looked upon as a way to rhetorically recover the loss that the city experienced.

Because I will focus primarily on the relationship between the team and the city's identity and the development of the fan community, I will incorporate ideas from Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Though Anderson focuses on national identity, I will look at ways in which sports fandoms constitute one such imagined community, drawing on aspects of both the team and local identity to create community cohesion. Using this idea of the community formed through media and social construction in lieu of geographic nearness and interaction, I hope to better explain the impact of place-based identities and the ways they are used, both within and without the communities from which they emerge. I also intended to analyze community formation around a football team as a response to crisis and external pressures on the community, suggesting that sports offers a method of community cohesion that becomes particularly

relevant when other forms of cohesion, such as geographic proximity or economic identity, are threatened.

In addition to my use of Anderson, I will also incorporate Ernest Bormann's fantasy theme analysis, an approach which "is used to look at how a group dramatizes an event and at how that dramatization creates a special kind of myth that influences a group's thinking and behaviors" (St. Antoine et. al. 2009, 205). Bormann's theory offers a way to explain how certain conceptions of sports community gain traction, including the use of sports of a response to civic trauma. The use of this approach as it relates to American football has precedent in Matthew Vosburg's 2008 thesis "From Aints to Saints" which examined the development and evolution of particular rhetorical visions in the discussion and coverage of the post-Katrina Saints and their meaning to the city of New Orleans. With this work I wish to expand the use of fantasy theme analysis to see how similar measures are used in a broader range of circumstances.

Vosburg focuses on a crisis event, looking at the destruction that Hurricane Katrina wrought and suggesting that fantasies were articulated via the Saints as part of the recovery. Such "rhetorical chaining," whereby the local lines of discourse gradually became accepted and moved into more regional and national discourses, only intensified with the Saint's Super Bowl win. As national attention was given to the team, the discourse of recover was talked about to a national audience. Yet while Vosburg focused on the discourses that emerged in the wake of a national disaster, there are also ways in which fantasy themes involving sports teams and the cities they represent emerge in connection with a wider variety of traumas than those Vosburg discusses. While Vosburg

concerns himself with “Events such as the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and… the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting” (Vosburg 2008, 3), I would suggest that similar fantasy chains can emerge with different kinds of trauma. The Pittsburgh Steeler’s rise to prominence in accordance with the decline of the steel industry provides an example of a trauma which was not a particular, fixed event, but rather a gradual economic decline. The use of the Steelers to articulate a blue collar fantasy of existence and behavior became important regarding civic identity, in which cheering for the Steelers could represent adherence to an economic mode of existence that was gradually fading. The displacement of the Baltimore Colts also alters the frame of what might be considered trauma as it was the team’s own selling which created a trauma of identity which residents of the city managed with various types of fantasies.

I also wish to examine the language used to characterize and articulate ideas about the community, particularly looking at the similarities they bear to other methods of community formation. These other ideas of community that have been co-opted included language relating to diaspora, religious language and symbolism, including totems, and other types of political language relating to symbolic representation, such as flags and territories. By using such already powerful terminology and comparisons, sports fandom can become a dichotomous mixture of sincerity and play, a leisure pursuit achieving a broader social function.

The discussion of the relationship between a sport and its city is a necessarily geographic one. Here, John Bale’s work becomes particular relevant in two distinct ways. Bale and Gaffney’s research on the stadium as a sporting space becomes a crucial

groundwork for analyzing the stadium as a locus of sensory experience (Bale and Gaffney 2004). This premise of sensory experience offers a way to understand the centrality of the stadium in what might be called a hierarchy of sporting spaces. Sporting communities attempt to recreate the stadium through experiences mimic those which might be found in the stadium, getting ever closer to a place which might not be geographically accessible. Bale's ideas about the topophilia of sporting locations, towns as well as stadiums, is also important to understanding much of the nostalgia and civic feeling which becomes enmeshed with an understanding of sport (Bale 1992). His understanding of places of sport as "mythical landscapes" also provides explanation for such intense nostalgia as it gets articulated in media, creating an imaginative landscape that attempts to capture a particular essence and manage the complexities and the anxieties that sporting landscapes and cities can produce. Such geographical concepts operate in conjunction with other aforementioned theoretical ideas, such as that of the imagined community, giving a distinctly spatial bent to those theories and providing a more full explanation that includes sport's inescapably geographic contexts.

## Background

### *Sports and Symbolism*

A portion of studies relating to sports and symbolism focuses on offensiveness in sporting names, mascots and practices (Strong 2004, King et. al. 2006, Eitzen 2009) such as the cultural harm that Native American mascots produce and what has and could be

done to deter their use. Beyond analyzing the ways such symbols are socially problematic, such studies can also include analysis of the ways commodification and consumption affect and encourage the media production of potentially offensive sporting symbols, looking at how such mascots are retained because of profitability and questioning their impact on the communities they involve (King et. al. 2006). There is also theoretical grounding for an analysis of sport symbolism that does not revolve around an explicitly offensive symbol. The idea of symbols such as flags having a quasi-religious significance finds its theoretical roots in Durkheim who suggested that symbols derived their power and importance from their ability to produce social cohesion (Durkheim 1965).

General work has been done analyzing Durkheim and looking at flags as not only socially but also psychologically powerful as a partially biological expression of dominance that can be traced in other primate behaviors (Shanafelt 2009). Within sports studies, work has been done to justify the application of scholars like Durkheim to sports studies, drawing connections between his theories about symbol and ritual and the practice of sport and the ways that athletes become stand-ins for the values of their represented communities (Birrell 1981). Though it should be noted that often the study of religion and sport focuses on the religiosity of those who participate in sport and the intersection of sport and religion as two related but distinct social phenomena (Baker 2007), there is nevertheless a focus on how sport itself constitutes a type of religion (Prebish 1993), including specific analysis of events, such as regarding the Super Bowl as a type of religious celebration (Price 2001). Symbols are a part of this spiritual

construction of power, and flags and flag-like symbols should be considered for their potential force in creating cohesion by drawing upon many of the same impulses that Durkheim and those following him argue religion does.

### *Sport, Community and Identity*

Anderson's idea of the 'imagined community,' a community formed through the use of media whereby people do not know all members but nevertheless envision themselves as a collective (Anderson 2006), is useful in the study of sport, as sporting symbols or events are often used as focal points for articulating or disputing such identities, as with Basque protests at the Tour de France attempting to trouble the French identity the event attempted to envision (Palmer 2001). Symbols play an important functional role in the production and regulation of community identities and the economic production of sports and sport symbols can complicate fandom (Sage 1996, Hughson and Free 2006, Walsh and Giulianotti 2007, Scherer and Jackson 2008) as symbols and discourses are often commercially produced (on 'official' websites, encouraged through the buying of 'official' merchandise) creating a fandom that has a complex relationship with 'official,' often meaning commercial, discourses. The influence of economic capital not only makes some sport suspect as a vehicle for economic gain, but it can also make place and community identification more tenuous since it opens teams up to being sold or becoming inaccessible to view.

Sport studies also frequently discuss Putnam's idea of social capital which seeks

to elucidate the benefits that individuals or communities derive from being a part of a sporting community and explores the ways in which said communities are more than just imagined fantasies of coherency (Putnam 2000). The emerging importance of Putnam's ideas has been recognized and articulated as an important factor in sports studies (Nicholson and Hoye 2008). One such study involved analyzing the social gains of belonging to a football club more commonly known for its hard drinking practices (Palmer and Thompson 2007). Another involved examining the ways in which requests for financial backing for stadium building draw upon social capital ideas to gain support. Arguments for public support of stadiums are often predicated on the idea that economic funding for sporting ventures will produce community gains - though such gains frequently fail to materialize and instead stadium construction can produce social and economic tensions (Smith and Ingham 2003). Other analysis of social capital makes deeper connections to place, looking at the impact of sport as a unifier on socially fragmented cities (Burd 2003), the ways that sporting rituals attempt to create spontaneous communities formed around sporting events and influence the creation of space for these temporary performances (Ingham and McDonald 2003), and how competing at 'home' potentially offers teams an advantage related not only to place but also to social aspects of that place (Mizruchi 1985). These studies offer ways to understand how sport functions within communities, including why people participate in sports or offer economic support to sporting ventures and what both communities and sport give and gain in their semi-symbiotic relationship. By understanding the motivations of those who engage with sport and the benefits they derive (or feel they

derive) from being part of a sporting community, a more complete understanding of the construction of community in a case study and the significance of that construction can be gained.

Along with the idea of the imagined community in terms of nationalistic discourses, specific issues of communal identity within sport that may not be explicitly nationalistic are also frequently addressed such as the impact of the presence of fans (Wann et. al. 2001) or the political and social ways that identities which people claim function and frame them (Carrington 2007). This study of community also encompasses issues of regional identity, such as Graham's analysis of Southern identity, suggesting that media conflates ideas like race and class while maintaining a geographic connection (Graham 2003), and the connections made between sporting rituals and performances associated with central Ohio and their connection to larger nationalist ideologies and discourses, such as those of militarization (Lindquist 2006). Some studies attempt to break down community identities into more individual ones for the purposes of classification, seeking to pinpoint the complexities of what might otherwise seem to be monolithic groups (Giulianotti 2002), classifying fans on the basis of interest and involvement in order to better understand their motivations and behaviors, including their attachment to the community. Many of these studies focus on the community and the construction of identity from within the community, such as the centrality of excessive alcohol consumption as a ritual that provides identity and cohesion for a football fan group called the "Grog Squad" (Palmer and Thompson 2007). Such studies demonstrate the ways that communities define their characteristics and behaviors as well as who they

consider as part of the community. However, some research has also looked at outsider perceptions of the community such as the discourses of hooliganism surrounding the Millwall fandom in England (Robson 2000) and the ways in which outsider perceptions simplify and mythologize such communities, often ignoring their complexity.

### *Sports and Race, Gender and Class*

Issues of representation are often complicated by the presence of gender, which breaks down discussions of populations from being homogenized wholes (normally treated as masculine) to addressing the concerns of sub-populations within those groups. A recent development, examinations of masculinity are often concerned with issues of bodies, including the ways bodies are described and demanded to perform and how power is built into these descriptions (Rail and Harvey 1995). These can include examinations of specific media artifacts, such as looking at the way Monday Night Football gazes upon the male body as a tool and a weapon (Trujillo 1995) or more general examinations of the operation of hegemonic masculine discourses within sports media as a whole, perpetuating stereotypes about what constitutes masculinity while mitigating anxieties about masculinity through the vehicle of sports and sports coverage (Sabo and Jansen 1998). Some studies have been sports specific, looking, for example, at the associations that dog fighting has with masculine expression (Evans et. al. 1998). Such study of sport relates to other research which has examined the intersection of sports and violence such as the unruly behavior of football ‘hooligans’ and its

significance to fandom (King 1997), the role violence plays in the enjoyment of sport (Bryant et. al. 1998) and the paradox of the demands for restraint placed upon football players who are also expected to fully participate in an inherently violent game (Ugolini 2007). Violence in sport is an issue which the literature suggests affects the creation and manner of social cohesion and often does so in either implicitly or explicitly masculine terms. There have been general analyses of the masculine narratives that frame sports stars and attempt to presented role models, ignoring potential crises and inconsistencies in the discussion of masculinity, (Whannel 1999, Whannel 2002). The intersection of the feminine in fandom has also been studied, including a study of the often abusive, sexist manner in which women in 'fandom' are treated and the ways female fans cope with such difficulties (Palmer and Thompson 2007, Jones 2008). There are also issues regarding the ways in which gender affects other aspects of sport and produces complications, such as the influence of gender on social capital and the way research could be done to address such gendered complications (Laberge 1995). These various concerns complicate the self-conscious construction of fandom as a monolithic group that is socially inclusive and focused on the team and the game rather than the audience.

Race is another critical component of the social dynamics of sports and sport spectatorship. Discussions of race have occurred in both the popular media as well as in academic scholarship, bringing to light the stereotypes and issues of media coverage (Davis and Harris 1998). As with masculinity, the subject of race affects representations of bodies, such as the tendency to focus on the physicality of Black athletes as opposed to other qualities such as mental acumen (Bigler and Jeffries 2008). These analyses also

include specific case studies of sporting figures such as Michael Jordan and the way discourses of race were constructed around him in order to maintain more dominant discourses of whiteness, suggesting that Jordan needed to be framed by the media in certain ways to fit into a discourse of color-blindness and to downplay his perceived 'otherness' (Andrews 1996) or the racial anxiety produced from Rush Limbaugh's discussion of Donovan McNabb and the implication that race had not been eliminated as a point of tension within sports (Hartmann 2007). The media expression of race is often analyzed in terms of the rhetoric used to express it and it often intersects with other social, sometimes legal, issues such as the associations formed between African American sports stars and criminal behavior (Berry and Smith 2000) and the application of critical race theory to sport to examine the ways in which power structures work to disadvantage certain athletes (Hylton 2008). Race and access to sport is also of a concern, with studies looking at the ways in which athletes deal with race and racism in the practice of sport (Jeffries 2001, Ross 2004, Singer 2005) and the ways in which access may or may not be increasing, such as the growing access black athletes have to 'prestige' sporting positions such as being a quarterback (Buffington 2005). As with gender, race provides an additional layer of complexity to the idea of the community and can disrupt the constructed cohesion of fandom.

The aforementioned tensions about access to sports and sporting communities and the overall commodification of sport also shows through in discussions on economics, looking at how minorities have often been limited in terms of access to the sporting hierarchy (Evans Jr. 1997) and more general analysis of the function of class and the way

it both enables and constrains participation (Gruneau 1999). The discussion of class reveals yet another discourse which often simultaneously flaunts its classed aspects while suppressing economic concerns, presenting sport as being there for the consumption of the middle to lower class even when they cannot afford its consumption. Though they are not always specifically addressed in every paper, issues such as race, gender and class often complicate views of community and should ideally be included in sociological studies even when they are not the main focus of the literature.

### *Sports and Media*

Sports community research often intersects with media studies, particularly in the ways in which media are used to mediate social identities. Such examinations demonstrate the influence of certain media such as television on sport (Whannel 1992) and show that being a part of fandom affects consumption of media and the gratification gained from such consumption (Gantz and Wenner 1995). More specific sport and media examinations reveal how online interactions influence the formation of fan communities (Scherer and Jackson 2008, Ferriter 2009), and bring together sports, media and gaming (Oates 2009). These studies use previously mentioned frameworks, such as race and gender, in order to explain anxieties and tensions implicit in sport and media interactions (Niven 2005), hyper-masculine violence getting acted out through media generated fantasies of hooliganism (Poulton 2008) and the traditions of bodies as controllable, exchangeable commodities that spectacles like the draft and video games involve (Oates

2009). Because of the breadth and complexity inherent in the ways that sports and media interact, particular case studies are valuable for narrowing down the focus and limiting the media examined to particular forms, addressing particular subjects (such as certain players or teams). Since one of the basic premises of human geography is that place matters, it is also useful to look at particular cases as geography can be a defining factor in both the creation and the reception of media products related to sport.

## Cases

### *The Pittsburgh Steelers*

While the city of Pittsburgh faced a decline in industry, the Steelers simultaneously experienced their longest and most well-known era of success during the 70s. As the reality of factory life began to fade, the team (which was especially known for its defense) more intensely articulated a connection to 'blue collar' life which was otherwise deteriorating. The idea of the Steelers functioning as a 'blue collar' team regardless of the city's economic makeup suggests that the team has emerged as a way to maintain a civic identity which was otherwise crumbling. Because Pittsburgh's economic decline meant that there were no longer enough jobs to support the population, the city experienced a population decline. A number of fantasy themes emerged out of that population shift. Leaving Pittsburgh is often figured in political terms, as a type of economically motivated diaspora, or in religious terms as an exodus. Because of the implied unwillingness to leave the city, there is attendant nostalgia. Performing the team identity and using the team's symbols is articulated as a way to maintain both the identity

of the city (i.e. the perception of Pittsburgh as a blue-collar town) and the civic identity of those who once lived there (i.e. fans who relocated, but still believe themselves to be 'Pittsburghers' and maintain an affiliation with the city). Adherence to the team functions as a connection in the absence of geographic and temporal proximity, recalling a city removed by both distance and time. The shifting city identity continues to be stabilized through rhetorical definitions and interpretations of the team and its performance which incorporate ideas of economic identity.

Surrounding the Steelers are also other issues of economics and masculinity. The reputation of the Steelers as a defense-oriented and often violent team is a theme that circulates and is alternately used to condemn or celebrate. Interwoven with this perception of the team as a particularly violent team, playing what is already a violent sport, are socio-economic discourses. The Steelers, from their name to their media representation, are heavily coded as "blue collar." This often intertwines with discourses that implies something particularly blue collar about enjoying the spectacle of violence. Such teams, it is suggested, play a type of game which satisfies their working class fans – namely a style of play focused on defense and 'hard' if not outright violent plays. One of the ways in which these distinctions and discourses are made even clearer is in the comparisons between the Steelers and other teams. Books, films, and other media coverage often set up an opposition between teams which are wealthier, such as the Dallas Cowboys, whose areas are perceived to be economically opposite, like the Seattle Seahawks, or whose style of play is seen to be different – less rough, more focused on offense rather than defense, utilizing the passing game (which rests largely on the

quarterback and play execution) instead of the rush (which depends on the abilities of the running backs and the blocking capabilities of the offensive line). This process of "othering" different teams reinforces team identity, and, through that, urban identity. The "blue collar" discourse then becomes a way of distinguishing the group from others around them.

### *The Baltimore Colts/Ravens*

The rise of the Baltimore Colts came not in relation to any specific city trauma, but nevertheless rhetorically was figured as providing legitimacy to a city lacking in a laudable identity. In particular, fantasy themes surrounding the 1958 championship game in which the Colts defeated the Giants circulate the suggestion that it was this game which gave Baltimore an importance and an ability to compare themselves to larger, geographically proximate cities such as New York and Washington D.C., substituting sporting efficacy for social, political, or economic strength. However, this narrative of football strength declined and ultimately ruptured when the team itself experienced a crisis, in the form of being sold to Indianapolis by then owner Robert Irsay. The disconnect between the fantasy of civic right to the team and the realities of economic ownership were navigated in particular ways and the significance of the past game intensified. The themes articulated in Baltimore suggested that they as a city had gotten less than their just due from a league which they had helped to build. The ways in which the lack of a team was dealt with and the political, social, and economic cases made, both

rhetorically and practically, for bringing a team back to the city, demonstrate the potential effect of fantasy themes.

The two cases offer a view of cities with fandoms that view football as a significant civic component, integral to the identity of the respective city. Each city also experienced a 'trauma' relating to sport, through which the perceived importance of the sport was articulated. There are even similarities in the identity of the fandom itself, with both teams constructing identities that focus on toughness and masculinity rooted in defense and certain socio-economic standings. There are differences as well – Pittsburgh's articulation of its fan identity focuses on issues not as prominent in Baltimore's, such as the geographic extent of its fan base, and Baltimore's production of sport attempts to mitigate the loss of the team itself, a loss that Pittsburgh never had to endure. Pieces of memorability, like the Terrible Towel, or organizations, like the Colt's Marching Band, are each unique to their respective cities. Yet despite differences, at the core of each case there is a city which incorporates football into its city identity in a significant way. Each merits analysis in order to better understand the processes by which football becomes such a crucial axis of identity and what the construction of that significance might provide to the stability and cohesion of civic identity.

**Methodology**

In order to understand the discourses at work in each of the cases, print media will be studied as one location of this discourse and understood using methods of discourse

analysis. Other media studied include several videos and television broadcasts, museum displays, and items of material culture (towels, lamps, figurines, etc.) will be studied. Mautner suggests that the purpose in studying print media comes from the fact that their "ubiquity, coupled with intensity of usage, public attention and political influence, should generate an intrinsic interest… the print media… very much reflect the social mainstream" (Mautner 2008, 32), justifying its study due to the fact that it has power to "shape widely shared constructions of reality" (Mautner 2008, 32). But because many forms of media do this, there are also ease of use factors to be considered in choosing newspapers as print "is already 'out there,' ready to be gathered, and does not require time consuming transcription before analysis" (Mautner 2008, 32) and because they constitute "a medium that provides information for the general public" (Menjivar and Kil 163, 2002). To achieve what Mautner calls "corpus-building" (Mautner 2008, 35), or the gathering of a body of texts to analyze, she draws on Bauer and Aarts to suggest that "attempts at random sampling… are generally not appropriate… Instead of random sampling a cyclical process has been recommended" in which "you begin by selecting an small but relevant homogenous corpus, analyze it and on the basis of your findings select again," repeating the process until "new data no longer yield new representations" (Mautner 2008, 35, Bauer and Aarts 2000). She points out that "if the discursive representations related to a particular event were to be investigated… an obvious structuring criterion could be time" (Mautner 2008, 37). Such events could include the Steelers' Super Bowl wins or the night the Colts were moved to Indianapolis.

Though some discourse analysis uses quantitative methods, this study will be

qualitative. Mautner observes that “it does not make sense to select texts mechanically and randomly” and that “choosing data always involves an element of subjective judgment” (Mautner 2008, 37). Because of this, she says “that subjectivity needs to be counterbalanced by rigour and choices exposed to critical scrutiny. The key correctives are transparency and accountability” achieved by “using a reasoned step-by-step approach to sampling” where one is able to “justify the choices made along the way” (Mautner 2008, 37). An example of this step-by-step methodology can be seen in Menjivar and Kil. For their purposes, Menjivar and Kil used Lexis-Nexis and narrowed their pool of studied articles, first using general search terms, then searching for terms more specific to their topic, eliminating duplicates, reading the articles while looking “for direct quotes from public officials” (Menjivar and Kil 2002, 163) and then selecting 22 articles. As Mautner suggests, they chose relevant articles rather than dispersing the focus by including too many sources containing information not directly relevant to the issues. As this study similarly seeks to look at attitudes embedded in public discourse, it will adopt a similar method of detailed searching, cyclical gathering and careful selection. However, because this project is interested in sports and dominant discourses on sports, other search methods will be used. Rather than using simply a general search engine alone, the specific sites of ESPN and Sports Illustrated will be mined due to the fact that they are two of the largest bodies in sports media and therefore their representations form one type of authority regarding sporting events and discourses about how to interpret those events. Using Mautner’s circular method, after those two sites have been mined for relevant articles and information saturation has been reached, the research will then be

expanded to major, national publications. The two discourses will then be compared in terms of content in order to see if there are any differences in the message. Finally, more local sources of discourse will be chosen to see any differences in message, such as local Pittsburgh or Baltimore papers. Mautner reminds researchers that they "must be at pains to resist the temptation of skewed sampling… cherry-picking texts that support their personal views and ignoring those that do not" (Mautner 2008, 37). Therefore, while some discourses may not have as much mainstream representation, it is nevertheless important to include them in order to recognize dissenting voices.

After the data has been gathered, there are various ways to approach the data. Texts will be analyzed to look at the terminology they use and its similarity to other discourses. For example, articles which talk about the Terrible Towel will be examined for similarities in usage to religious terms, such as those conceived of by Durkheim (Durkheim 1965) and nationalist terms, including the nationalism conceived of by Anderson, in which references to a common language and ways of rhetorically visualizing the community become important (Anderson 2006). Some attention will be given to other aspects of the text as well, such as "nonverbal message components" (Mautner 2008, 43), referring to pieces of media such as pictures and drawings which often accompany articles. The process of textual analysis will, however, remain largely qualitative. Though some discourse analysis does incorporate quantitative discourse methods such as word counts it is more useful in this case to go beyond quantifiable issues and look at the qualitative aspects that convey the communal meanings and articulate the relationship between fandom and place.

The ubiquity of print media provides a good foundation for its use. However, print media and film are converging. For example, articles and columns posted on ESPN's website often contain links to videos about the subject. The subjects being studied are also bound up in a number of important film and television artifacts, perhaps most notably including the Super Bowl. Without studying the media event itself and only looking at the discourses surrounding it, the study would be incomplete. It is therefore important to study visual media as well. As sports coverage and discussion, though orchestrated, would not in these cases fall under the category of fiction, an approach to documentary study is appropriate. Pollack reminds researchers that "like all other forms of communication, documentaries also do not represent an objective approach to reality" (Pollack 2008, 79), analysis of sport film must be approached carefully, mindful of the fact that while it is constructing itself as real, there are many ways in which it is socially produced. Yet it is precisely that social production which is important to recognize before understanding how sports film contributes to larger discourses about certain sports events or cases.

Since there are fewer film texts (as opposed to print texts), the process of selection will be different. Pollack suggests that researchers remain mindful of "the fact that film analysis can be a very time-consuming endeavor" (Pollack 2008, 81). In addition to this obstacle, there is also the difficulty that many of the nationally broadcast film artifacts related to the three cases described are not always able to be accessed. For example, ESPN shows such as *Pardon the Interruption* or *Around the Horn* often discussed issues pertinent to sports scholarship. However, those shows are not preserved

in DVD format and, unless recorded at the initial time of broadcast or posted onto a film site such as YouTube (which might have limited reliability), the film artifact is essentially inaccessible. Some films, such as the Super Bowl broadcast, are available on DVD or have their content posted on websites such as the NFL's, including several short Steelers films. However, many of the regular season games are unrecorded and because the film is so strictly controlled by the NFL, there are significant obstacles to their access. Because of the dearth of these texts in general and the even smaller pool that exists after inaccessible texts have been eliminated, there is little need to narrow the pool down further. What Pollack calls the "context of product" (Pollack 2008, 81) becomes relevant here: unlike historical events (such as famous battles), there are normally few contending narratives to the sports documentaries that are produced. The production of documentaries about sports is normally in the hands of companies invested in sports such as the NFL or ESPN, and it is important to recognize the impact of that control over production. And because the use of film is so heavily copyrighted, the ability for other films to be produced is limited, narrowing the number of artifacts but giving a particular kind of authority and meaning to the texts that are created.

The text of the documentaries can be analyzed in much the same way as the print artifacts, looking for imbued meanings in the construction of language. However, the "analysis of the verbal representation of social actors needs to be complemented by the analysis of their visual representation" (Pollack 2008, 83) as that affects and constructs meaning as well. For example, interviewing Steelers fans about their connection to the team gains a particular meaning when those fan interviews are filmed inside of a mill or

factory. The visual construction, the position of the shots, the way the film is edited, and all of the other various visual cues can have as much of an impact as the words the narrators or the interviewees are saying, and even which interviewees are selected can be significant (Pollack 2008, 84-89). In order to organize this analysis, Pollack suggests using Iedema's hierarchy of frame, shot, scene, sequence, generic stage, and work as a whole (Iedema 2001, 189; Pollack 2008, 90) to break down each film into constituent analyzable parts. That strategy will be used in this study, particularly in long and complex works, including a filmed PowerPoint presentation on the Steelers, NFL films on fans, and a documentary on the Baltimore Colts. It will also be used in the analysis of imagery coupled with text, such as websites which utilize a heavy visual component in addition to the textual or books, with covers and pictures that present particular images which create and reinforce ideas about fans and the team. There are also analyzable aspects in presentations of material culture, such as museum exhibits about the teams which physical construct markers of identity and allow for their three dimensional exploration. By looking at both the visual and the textual and analyzing them in light of each other, a more complete reading of the various representations of the fandom, across a multiplicity of media types, can be attained.

Both readings will then be examined in relationship to each other. Because they are often created by the same or similarly aligned media production groups, the messages are also likely to be similar. However, because the message will be transmitted in different ways, it is important to recognize the various techniques through which the discourse can be transmitted to the audience, such as the use of visual media to reinforce

the ideas being discussed in the text of the film. Careful readings of these two major components of media discourse will result in a relatively thorough picture of the major discourses in circulation regarding each specific issue with an understanding of what attitudes and conceptions those discourses draw upon and produce.

**Organization of the Thesis**

The first chapter focuses on the economics of the Pittsburgh Steelers. Economic identity is a particularly strong force which structures the team and the city identities. This chapter looks at that process, analyzing the ways in which terms like "diaspora" are coopted in order to describe what happened to the city and its population. It also examines how economic identity is used to distinguish the Steelers while "othering" other football teams, and how this construction of difference connects and resonates with ideas about masculinity and the team's style of play.

The second chapter focuses on a particular team artifact, the Terrible Towel. Because the Terrible Towel merges a number of complex discourses, including ideas about religion, economics, and social identity, it is a particularly fruitful site for examining the ways in which these concepts are constructed in a sports team. Using Durkheim's idea of the symbol and examining the discourses that surround the Towel, it suggests that the Towel serves as a marker for community identity that manages a type of symbolic cohesion, despite its complex reality. As this marker, it also serves a geographic

purpose, and the chapter examines the ways in which the Towel is used to shape the space around it and imply ideas about the community's spatial extent.

The third chapter shifts to the Baltimore Colts and examines the loss of a team, particularly its social ramifications. This chapter focuses heavily on the idea of the Baltimore Colts Band, a reminder of the team's absence and a group which contributed to the rhetorical structuring of the desire for a team. This chapter also includes an economic element, as it examines the anxieties inherent in the divide between the social conception of the team as part of the city and the economic reality of the team belonging to a particular owner, who may or may not choose to maintain ties with the city.

The final chapter looks at museum spaces for both the Steelers and the Colts/Ravens. Because museums are both spatial and social constructions, they provide particular insights into the ways in which the community sees the team and the messages about the team and the city that those creating the museum seek to transmit. In addition to focusing on a general message of team identity, the analysis also focuses on the ways in which space is structured, including an examination of interactive space that invites imaginative participation in the sports community.

Though each chapter has a different topic, there are several threads of analysis which are maintained through each of them. These include how communities are constructed using media and media artifacts, how space and civic identity plays an integral role in the shaping of a sports fandom and vice versa, how sports becomes a method of maintaining civic nostalgia, and how economic identities are likewise bound up in civic and sporting identities. The conclusion brings the threads together and

examines these overarching themes in greater detail, suggesting that they extend beyond circumstances relating to these two particular teams and are shaping forces within the larger world of sports.

# Chapter 1: The Economics of the Steelers

One of the central mythologies of the Steelers identity is the idea that the city's economic downturn when coupled with the team's 70s Super Bowl wins created a unique circumstance, the result of which was the "Steelers Nation." The use of the term "nation" is a rhetorical flourish but is one that hints at larger themes that define the community. A nation, for example, is vast, and idea that will recur in the construction of the identity of the Steelers fandom – that it is omnipresent, that it is everywhere. However, the way in which it *came* to be everywhere invokes another important nationalist discourse, that of economics. On an obvious level, the name "Steelers" references the industry, at least at one time, of Pittsburgh. However, there are numerous, complex ways in which economics is bound up with Pittsburgh. The economic decline of the city became a defining moment for its sports fandom, and through today there are strong discourses of nostalgia and ideas regarding the team which rely on underlying economic understandings.

### *Nostalgia for Pittsburgh and the Concept of Diaspora*

A key component in the fantasy evoked by "Steeler Nation" is the idea that residents of Pittsburgh left unwillingly and that the city somehow remains a part of them. In Andersonian terms, their imaginary community was, to a certain degree, formed by the city where they came from, rather than being integrated into the city that they moved to. This nostalgic attachment to Pittsburgh has led to the use of the term diaspora to describe what happened to the city and how those who left felt about the change.

A PowerPoint presentation called *The Socio-Economic Underpinnings of Steeler Nation*, succinctly summarizes what has become a key and oft repeated discourse; that foundations of the fandom rest on the expatriated blue collar workers who were forced to take their family, and their fandom, elsewhere. This presentation was initially part of a set of BYOPPT (Bring Your Own PowerPoint) events that took place in Pittsburgh in October and November of 2008 ("BYOPPT on Vimeo" 2008). The events were hosted by Encyclopedia Destructica, which describes itself as a "community-based artist book publisher based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania." ("Encyclopedia Destructica"). From the outset, the creation of the media was grounded in Pittsburgh, with a particular vested interest in the city. The presentation became available to a wider audience when it was incorporated into the Carnegie Mellon Miller Gallery's exhibit on the Steelers, *Whatever it Takes*, from August 2010 to February 2011. The presentation was on continuous loop on a television in the museum was also packaged as a DVD and sold both at the exhibit and online through the museum's website [Figure 1: The Socio-Economic Underpinnings of Steeler Nation]. Such limited presentation and marketing is already suggestive of the audience. Initially, the presentation was at a Pittsburgh event and though available online, the existence of the exhibit would likely only be known to those people viewing Pittsburgh media (local television stations, newspapers, etc.), which mentioned it. This suggests an audience with a specific geographic connection, one already primed to understand the discourses into which Atkinson taps.

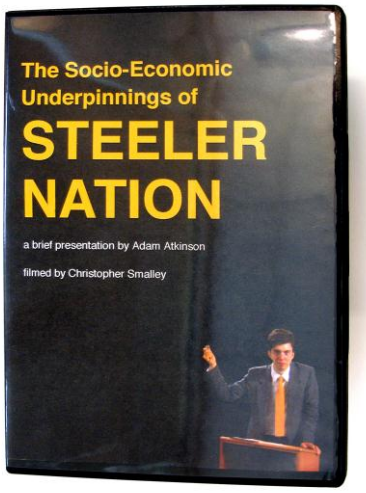


Figure 1: The Socio-Economic Underpinnings of Steeler Nation

The presentation, which the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Blog 'n' Gold author Dan Gigler described as a "touch of academia" (Gigler 2011), takes the form of a lecture to a class. Adam Atkinson, the man on the cover who presents the PowerPoint, makes a sustained argument for the ultimate uniqueness of the Steelers fanbase due to its grounding in the economic difficulties and sporting successes of the seventies.

In the course of the video, Atkinson leads the viewer through a PowerPoint, taking on the persona of a professor instructing an unseen class of Steelers fans, about the history of their team. Incorporating both imagery and statistics, he plays on an academic idea, a performative technique which, like the terms he uses, implies a certain level of seriousness to match his somewhat playful use of the academic setting. Throughout the entire video, *Pomp and Circumstance* plays in the background and while Atkinson's tone is unwaveringly serious, the subject matter alone gives a hint of parody to the project. This should not undermine either the meaning or the sincerity of Atkinson's speech, however. In making this video, presented in Pittsburgh and included in a gallery designed

to present the team's culture to the team's own fans, Atkinson speaks to an audience already prepared to take his words at face value, perhaps even having some idea of what he might say. Atkinson is able to play and be serious at the same time because the seriousness is already embedded in the audiences' expectations in which excess never crosses the line into ridiculousness. Instead it is figured as loyalty appropriate to the community and articulating a sincere depth of feeling.

Throughout, he steps over the line between sincerity and farce multiple times, often using loaded language to do so. At one point in the presentation, Atkinson quotes blogger Jonathan Barnes, reading a quote from him as if it were a dramatic monologue. The lengthy quote [Figure 2: Jonathan Barnes on Nostalgia for Pittsburgh] suggests that the feeling of being away from Pittsburgh is akin to "the painful nostalgia that expatriates feel when they think of being away from their homeland" (*Socio-Economic* 2010). He then tells the invisible audience that:

> I hope this hits home for you class. A very important part of what makes this different than other sports nations – the element of choice, agency. It's not something these Steelers fans had. They feel as though they were ripped away from a city they loved. I hope that speaks to the emotional depth of this Steelers Nation. (*Socio-Economic* 2010)

The words and the tone in which he delivers them verge on melodrama; however, it is a complex type of melodrama which, like other forms of fandom play, suggests that there is an underlying sincerity of belief in what is being said. In this understanding, Atkinson's statement that "I hope this hits home for you class" becomes more rhetorical; he already knows that, for many of those who would likely be watching, it does.

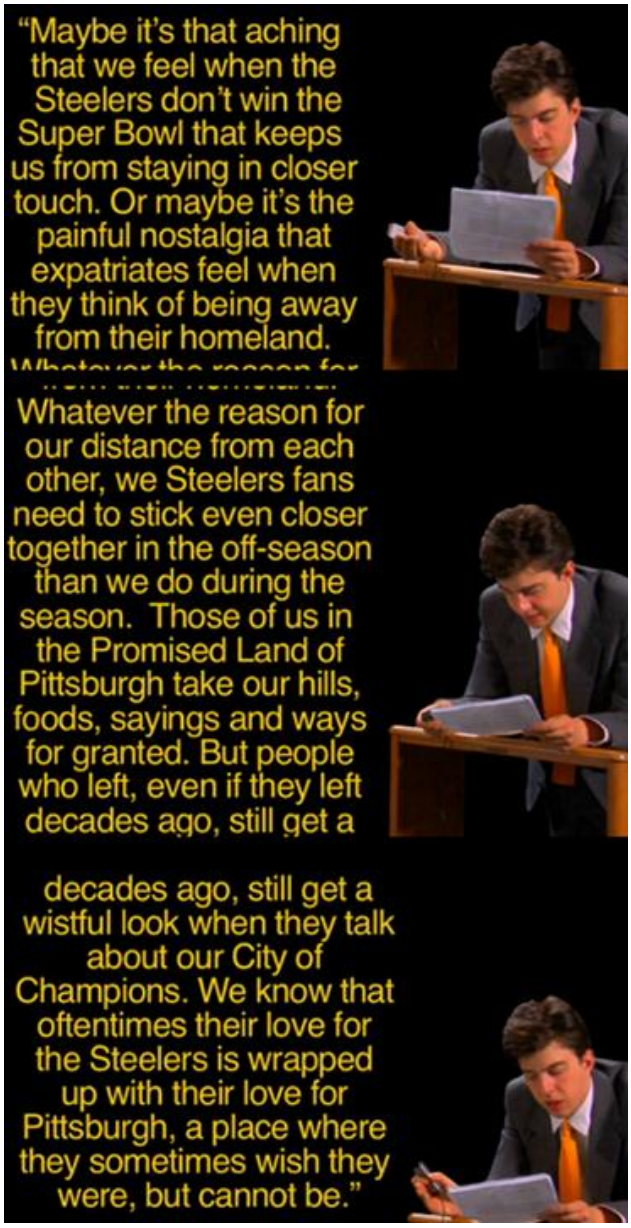


Figure 2: Jonathan Barnes on Nostalgia for Pittsburgh

For Atkinson, legitimizing the use of the terminology of the nation also requires substantiating its uniqueness, particular as the use of the term has become increasingly ubiquitous in sports coverage. The sincerity of his argument, therefore, has a secondary

use, to distinguish the Steelers' fandom from other types of fandoms. It is not enough to be a nation; being a nation when others are not suggests a depth or a meaning that cannot be duplicated simply by appropriating the word nation. Key in Atkinson's argument is the idea that other teams:

> throw the term sports nation around like it has no meaning – Packers, Lakers, Red Socks, the list goes on…These are sports nations that came up for rather mundane reasons… The Steelers Nation was created with a point of origin, a genesis, that's what makes it different. A concentrated period of time, a single generation in which hundreds of thousands of Pittsburghers were practically forced to leave. (*Socio-Economic* 2010)

Later, in the closing moments of the presentation, he tells the audience:

> I want you to be prepared for when these jokers from other sports nations come at you with some empty argument about how their sports nation is bigger or more passionate. I want you to ask them if their sport nation is a legitimate cultural diaspora, because I assure you it is not. (*Socio-Economic* 2010)

This idea of legitimacy is a factual impulse that seems to be both playful yet crucially important to Atkinson's argument. Atkinson uses charts with data derived from the census, designed to emphasize the extent of the city's population decline [Figure 3: Atkinson's Economic Explanation] [Figure 4: Atkinson's Economic Explanation, part 2]. By using this data, Atkinson makes a claim to factuality, using visualizations of the statistics he mentions as a way to give them greater impact and suggest their veracity.

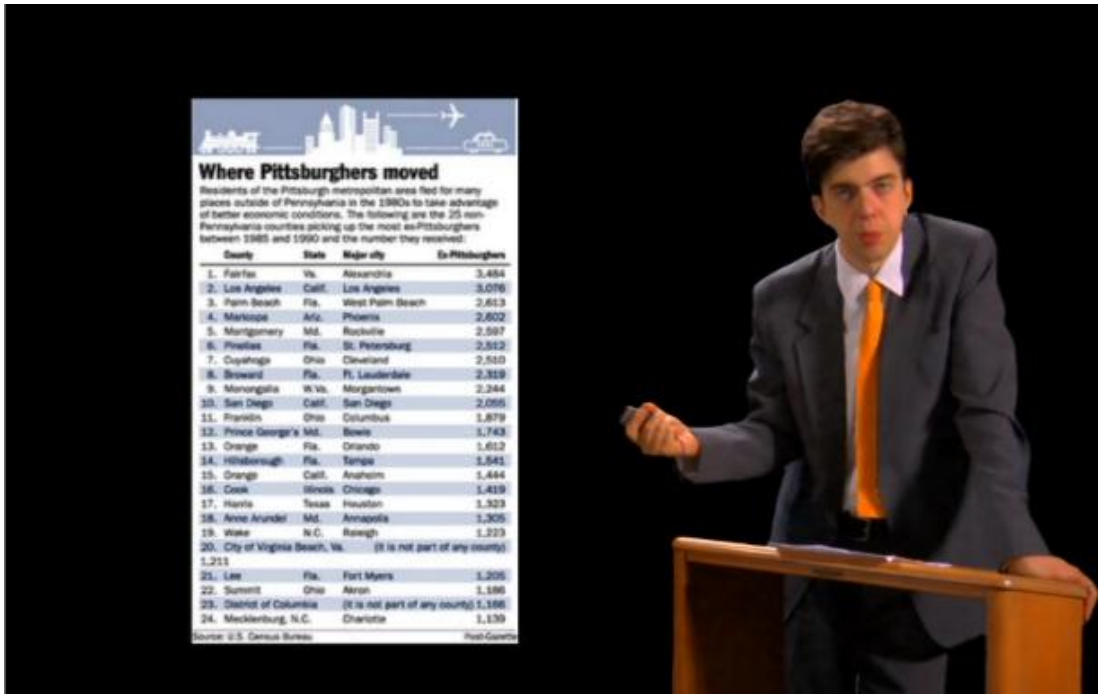


Figure 3: Atkinson's Economic Explanation

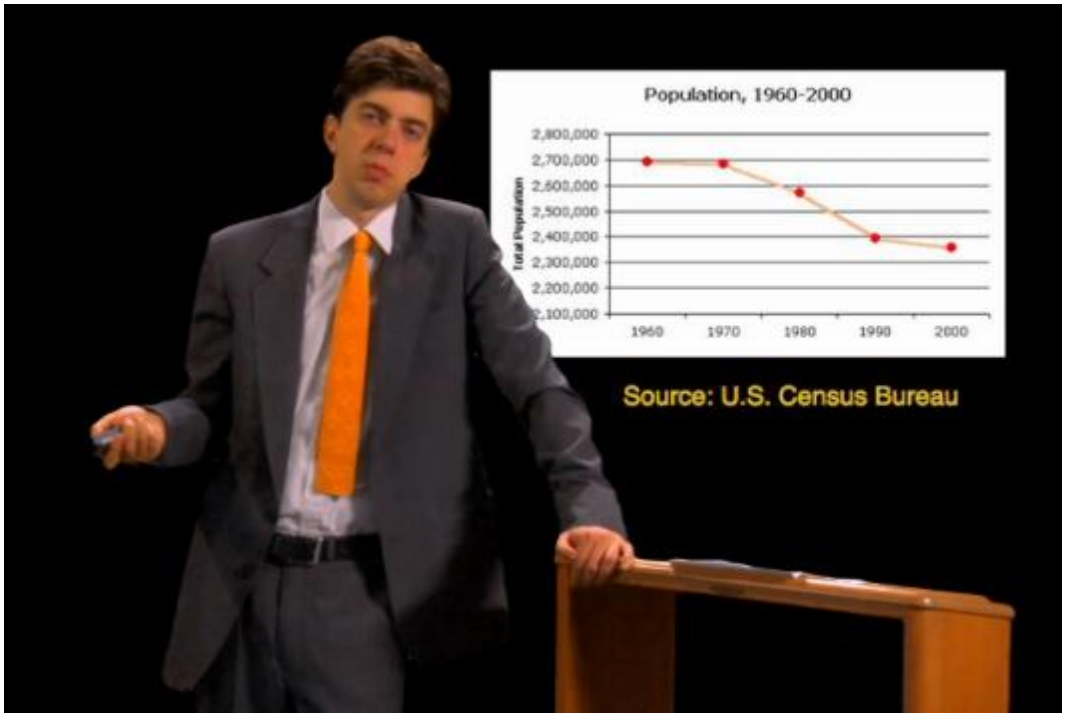


Figure 4: Atkinson's Economic Explanation, part 2

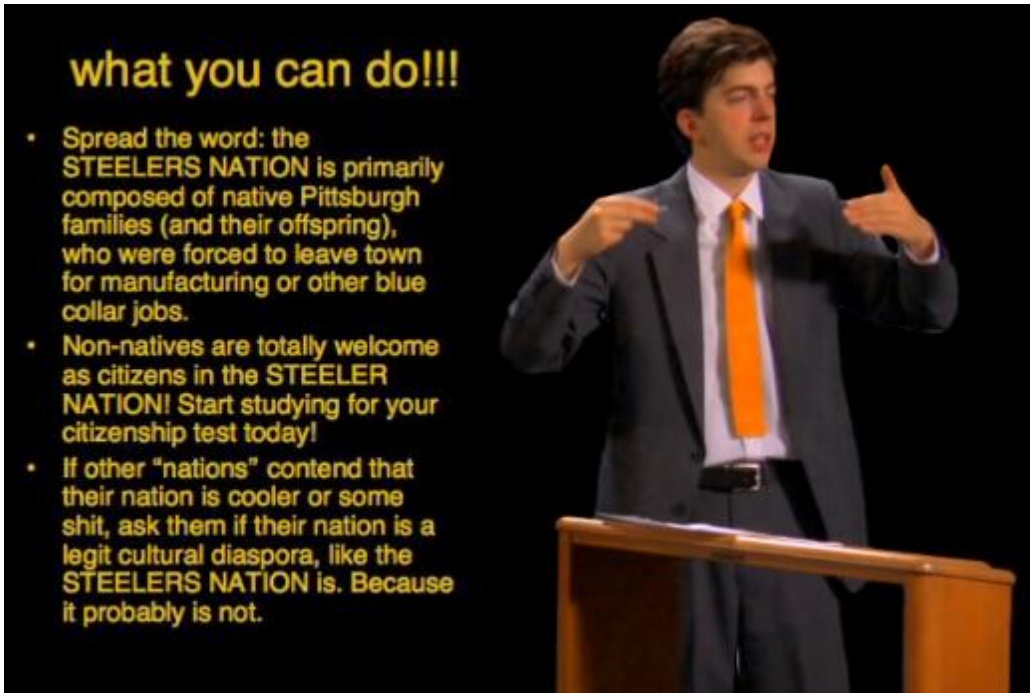


Figure 5: "What You Can Do!!!"

Though a simple use of census data does not address the complexity of the idea of a diaspora, it provides his viewers with an image of reassuring factuality. However, at the climax of the presentation, there is more than data at work.

These concluding arguments not only attempt to utilize quantitative data to emphasize their points, they also become moderately aggressive, dismissing other arguments about which sports teams might be better and positioning the views for potential conflict with fans of these other teams. The “what you can do” segment statements [Figure 5: "What You Can Do!!!"] are delivered in a defensive tone, which along with the text helps to further suggest that the fanbase is othered and must argue to protect those distinctions. The closing also suggests a type of self-deprecating pride

involved in the understanding of the so-called diaspora – that in its difficulty, there is something which fans can seize upon to be proud of, that provides identity and serves to distinguish this particular fanbase from all others. This summation at the end of the film once more reinforces what, according to Bormann's theory, are the key mythologies that have "chained up" and become widely believed and accepted modes of understanding the team and its history.

### *The Pittsburgh "Diaspora" in Context*

The labeling of those who left as a result of Pittsburgh's economic decline as a "diaspora" is not an entirely uncommon one, nor does it exclusively apply to sporting contexts. In a linguistic article entitled "Pittsburghese" online: vernacular norming in conversation," Barbara Johnstone and Dan Baumgardt used the diaspora motif as well and claimed that, as with sport, there was nostalgia for "Pittsburghese" speech:

> …local conditions beginning in the 1980s resulted in a kind of economic diaspora, and over half of the participants in the discussion are people who have moved away from or to the area. Vernacular norms that resonate with their nostalgia are thus particularly likely to be suggested and reinforced, as are forms that have easily comparable counterparts in places where these participants live now. (Johnstone and Baumgardt 2004, 123)

Within a sporting context, no less than an economic context, it can be a useful term. In his analysis of Pittsburgh Steelers bars in Fort Worth Texas, Jon Kraszewski offers a useful justification of the usage of the term in a geographic context:

> Cultural geography offers a language to understand the conscious and unconscious affections to home and place that sports fans experience during football telecasts. Diaspora gives a language to understand home and place for mobile populations.

> Diaspora carries with it a flexible view of community—like late capitalist theories of community such as neo-tribes do—but it crucially suggests a permanent vision of origins that accounts for the reasons of identifying a specific region as …My use of the term diaspora is atypical in the way it looks at regional movements within one country instead of national or continental dispersions across the globe, but a focus on dispersion and origins offers new ways to understand the pleasures and/or reasons of sports fandom in a mobile and uncertain world. (Kraszewski 2008, 142)

The use of the term diaspora can be a contentious one. Because of its connections to circumstances such as the slave trade and Jewish persecution, other uses of the word, whether popular or scholarly, particularly in circumstances where there is not political or social persecution driving the movement, may seem to trivialize it. In this particular circumstance, the word's usage by a working class group likely largely composed of whites may be seen as an inappropriate cooption of suffering. Scholars like Rogers Brubaker, in remarking on the proliferation of the term in both academic and popular culture, have also expressed concern that the term is being "stretched to the point of uselessness" and that "if everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so" (Brubaker 2005, 3). Attempting to articulate a more concrete definition, Brubaker suggests that "one can identity three core elements that remain widely understood to be constitutive of diaspora," namely dispersion, homeland orientation, and boundary maintenance (Brubaker 2005, 5).

In defining it as such, however, Brubaker also leaves space for a broader definition. He notes, for instance, that dispersion "can be interpreted strictly as forced or otherwise traumatic dispersions; more broadly as any kind of dispersion in space, provided that the dispersion crosses state borders; or… more broadly still, so that

dispersion within state borders may suffice" (Brubaker 2005, 5). The idea of diaspora becomes a more nebulous one when trying to describe the shared experiences of a group which is unified by ties such as civic identity and economics, rather than by other larger forces such as race and religion. The population which left Pittsburgh was smaller than many of the other diasporas which Brubaker mentions and not comprised of groups as inherently cohesive. However, if taken under the loosest of terms he sets out, during the decline there was a move out of Pittsburgh and the sporting environment offered an opportunity for a type of cohesion to be constructed. The focus on the city of Pittsburgh, while also not a "homeland" in the most traditional sense either, also seems to fit his criteria. Drawing upon Safran (1991), he suggests that there are qualities the homeland embodies, that the homeland serves "as an authoritative source of value, identity, and loyalty" (Brubaker 2005, 5). The homeland is the "true, idea home" about which people maintain "a collective memory or myth" and to which members "continue to relate, personally or vicariously… in a way that significantly shapes one's identity and solidarity" (Brubaker 2005, 5). Much in the Atkinson presentation echoes this and applies it to Pittsburgh – the sense that there are traditions which ought to be maintained, that Pittsburgh provides a particular grounding to which fans of the team necessarily relate. Even Brubaker's final criterion, boundary maintenance, is reflected to some degree by the behavior of the sporting fans. According to Brubaker, boundary maintenance "involv[es] the preservation of a distinctive identity… a distinctive community help together by a distinctive, active solidarity, as well as by relatively dense social relationships" (Brubaker

2005, 6),[1] with the act of watching sports, particularly with others, illustrating one potential type of such maintenance, bringing together community members and ritualizing certain patterns of behavior and consumption tied in with those communities.

It would, of course, be absurd to think that Brubaker's particular article had any bearing on the behavior of fans. However, Brubaker's understanding is that these three precepts are what continually surface in discussion of diaspora and that the term has permeated into popular culture. While the embodiment is not perhaps full, there are echoes of Brubaker's diaspora definition in Pittsburgh's situation which provides some critical grounding for why it may have been understood as such. Given the increasingly broad uses of the term, it is not perhaps surprising that it would be used to describe what happened to the city.

Because of the increasingly prevalent usage of the term in popular culture, "it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of disaporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on" (Brubaker 2005, 13), so we can understand diaspora in a way which does not immediately reject more popular usages, but instead offers the opportunity to analyze them on their own terms. This, together with Krazewski's somewhat flexible definition, provides an approach to the term "diaspora" which allows an exploration of *why* the term might be used in the context of Pittsburgh's economic decline and what the usage of that term might be providing for those who deploy it. By contextualizing experience with the word "diaspora," the experience is given an

[1] Though he does later remark that "not all discussions of diaspora… emphasize boundary maintenance" (Brubaker 2005, 11) and that there are certain times when fluidity is emphasized more than permanence.

immediate context, a way to read the experience being described. The use of diaspora suggests that there is an emotional significance to the experience, and perhaps a desire for the experience to be understood as such. The connotation of the word may coopt a type of gravitas and provide shorthand to explain that the economic movement which happened was undertaken unwillingly, and that there was a deep sense of loss attached to the experience. Atkinson suggested that the crucial difference between the movement of Pittsburgh's citizens and other movements was the lack of choice on the part of the latter fan community, once again framing the situation as an unwilling movement, due to an unfortunate series of circumstances.

Attempts to recuperate this loss of the city and urban identity have frequently, as Krazewski examined, been linked to sport. Sport serves as a unifying force which offers cohesion that economic and city identity alone might not provide. Along with the sport itself, there is also a measure of sporting success implicated in the process of attachment and representation. In the DVD, Atkinson addresses the question of why there was no "Browns Nation" or "Lions Nation" on an equivalent scale to Pittsburgh's, when Cleveland and Detroit experienced similar economic declines. His answer was that Pittsburgh's hitherto-unseen success in the 70s gave the people there at the time something to rally around. In Jere Longman's book *If Football's a Religion, Why Don't We Have a Prayer?*, the author claims that:

> It was sometimes said there were two kinds of Pittsburghers: those who came back and those who wanted to come back... For the Pittsburgh diaspora, the team represented a kind of sentimental longing for the way things used to be… fidelity to the Steelers was a matter of municipal respect. (Longman 2005, 74)

The Steelers were rhetorically linked because of circumstance to the city that they represented and, during a time of population decline, became a way for people from that city to retain a sense of identity. While not every person who moved away from Pittsburgh would have been a Steelers fan and while many undoubtedly moved on and forged identities that were attached to the new cities they eventually ended up in, the rhetorically constructed image of the loyal, blue-collar Pittsburgher who had to leave the city but who could still cheer for his team on Sundays has been a lasting image. In a society as mobile as that of the US, it may be that sports and specifically sports fandom offers one mode of creating the perception of stability. The rapid globalization and the movement that has become prevalent in modern society can threaten to destabilize identity; sports provides a secure locus around which those fragmented identities might be consolidated.

As Bormann might describe it, this fantasy of geographic displacement recovered by team loyalty that reshapes the relationship between geography and identity has chained upwards (Bormann 1985). It is a commonly repeated precept, one which has gained traction even at the national level. One New York Times article claimed that "if… Steeler Nation now extends to the planet's farthest corners, surely it's in large part because so many Pittsburghers have left home" (Brubach 2006). ESPN, the largest sports media network in the United States, has also produced media items which have incorporated this mythology. One ESPN documentary, an episode of NFL Films Presents entitled "Steelers Nation," the narrator claimed in closing that the Steelers were "a link home for those who left and never forgot where they came from" ("Steelers Nation"

2006). In that same short documentary, Scott Paulsen, a Pittsburgh area broadcaster, claimed that "Every Pittsburgher can tell you the same story, which is, uh, Dad and Mom and Uncle Stush and my brother Bobby all had to relocate somewhere… it was an exodus" ("Steelers Nation" 2006). The idea that this was a common experience, shared by the whole city – supporting the team does not construct community out of nothing, but helps to build back up what supposedly once existed before it was torn down. The shared story which is the narrative of the past provides the foundation for the fandom, whose story is the shared narrative of the present and the future. Later in the film, Paulsen opined that:

> When you're displaced, you look for something familiar. And I think so many people were displaced from the Pittsburgh area, that they sought out other folks that [they] were like. And that's why today you can go in any major city in the United States and find a black and gold club. Every Sunday, you can gather together with people that are like you, good or bad, speak the same language, and watch the Steelers ("Steelers Nation" 2006)

Another commentator in the film, Dr. Paul Friday, a University of Pittsburgh Psychologist, suggested that "This dispersion took a culture with it and it planted seeds and those seeds are growing in other places… you can see it as people are getting ready to relive a place they have owned" ("Steelers Nation" 2006). Games are in part a performance that seeks not just to celebrate a football game, but to reclaim a place and a time past. In an article for the *Monthly Review* entitled "The Glory and the Gutting," McCollester also noted that "Whatever deity oversees such matters, she must have a sense of equity or cosmic balance because the Steeler Nation in diaspora enjoyed its moment of glory just as the real, living, here-still-today city of Pittsburgh, near

bankruptcy, suffered humiliation and dismemberment" (McCollester 2005, 30), referring to the record breaking 4 Super Bowl wins which occurred in the 1970s, around the same time as the mill closures. Like others McCollester uses the term diaspora as a marker to indicate the impact, personal and social, that the economic collapse of the Pittsburgh had on the population. The use of the term diaspora term may be contestable, and there are numerous ways in which what happened to people in Pittsburgh does not match with all conceptualizations of diaspora. However, as Brubaker argued, the term has disseminated significantly, and understanding where and why it is used is of import. The choice of Pittsburgh's civic and sporting community (or at least significant, vocal members) to articulate the meaning of that move in such a fashion indicates a desire for the phenomenon to be seen as serious and damaging, and the efforts to recover that loss as similarly meaningful.

### *Economics and Masculinity*

This conceptual distinction between the nature of the Steelers fandom and other strong fanbases is one that likewise permeates the mythos. It becomes especially important when the team comes into conflict with a team whose city is perceived to be a particular contrast to the city of Pittsburgh. In such cases, the identity of the city plays upon the understanding of certain cities as particularly "othered," frequently in an economic and masculine sense. This particular fantasy theme owes some of its grounding to the Steelers of the seventies, who found a particular opponent in the 1970s Dallas Cowboys.

The conflation of Pittsburgh's civic and economic identity with the Steelers comes forth in Chad Millman and Shawn Coyne's book *The Ones Who Hit the Hardest*. Following three simultaneous storylines, Millman and Coyne trace the development of the 1970s Steelers and Cowboys, as well as the Union developments that would eventually culminate in the loss of the steel industry. It looks at the backgrounds of the plays as well as the coaching staff that pieced them together, implying a distinction between the more recently founded American Football League teams and the older National Football League teams. Though they eventually merged, there was still a current of distinction between the organizations and their teams. The AFL, it is implied, was founded by bored, wealthy youth who wanted a part of the growing sports media complex, rather than having the strong ties to their respective cities which the NFL teams purportedly had.

The cover of the book itself speaks to the contrasts between the two identities [Figure 6: The Ones Who Hit the Hardest]. Above the title is a panoramic shot of the city of Pittsburgh, foregrounding the mills with smoke billowing from their smokestacks, out over the river. The photograph is subtly washed in a light tint of yellow, chromatically connecting the city to the team's colors. Beneath the title there is a shot of #58, Dwight White, standing over a grounded Dallas player in an aggressive position, fist cocked back, while the Dallas player is curled up on the ground holding on to the ball:

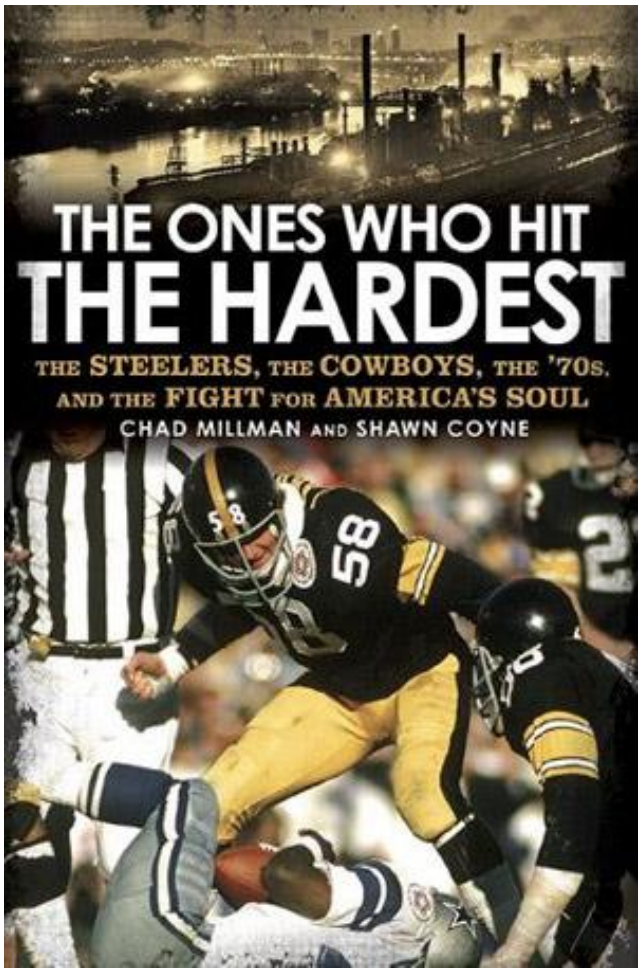


Figure 6: The Ones Who Hit the Hardest

The title and subtitle of the book make it even clearer that the authors consider the Steelers to be embodiment of hard-hitting plays, a style that, in some way, represents the city and perhaps even the country (as implied by the subtitle's inclusion of "the fight for America's soul"). The inside blurb of the book makes the connection between the Steelers style of play and the socio-economic behaviors of the city explicit, claiming that the Steelers of the 70s "played in the spirit of their city: hard-nosed and relentless"

(Millman and Coyne 2010). In an article before the Steelers' most recent Super Bowl entitled "Steelers Are America's Real Team," ESPN writer Chad Millman would revisit this idea, describing the clashes between the two teams by saying that the "Steelers represented their blue-collar, coal-dust choked city with physical dominance on the field. The Cowboys, with gleaming pants, stars on their helmets and trickery on offense, reflected the slick, oil-rich, new-money ways of Dallas" (Millman 2011). In describing the match in this fashion, Millman creates a moral hierarchy of play: physical dominance is positively figured, authetic and deserving, connected to a blue-collar ethic, while trick plays and subtle offense are viewed as deceptive and negative, and implicitly connected to the different type of economic activity which was making Dallas wealthy.

However, despite the positioning of such play in a favorable light, Millman and Coyne's book also makes it clear that there is a sense of sometimes bitter nostalgia attached to such play. Despite the perceived virtue of their blue-collar ethic and their hard-hitting team, "As Pittsburgh rusted, the new and glittering metropolis of Dallas… signaled the future of America" (Millman and Coyne 2010), rhetorically positiong the Steelers and their style of play as a nostalgic recollection of a bygone era. The argument for the economic anxiety that the team is needed to mitigate again surfaces. Dallas is presented as the vision of the "future," the new wave against which the city of Pittsburgh will ultimately fail, at least in an economic sense. However, for football fans, the ending that they already know will happen provides another layer of meaning. Pittsburgh defeats Dallas and has an unprecedented decade in their Super Bowl victories of the 1970s. While they lose economically, they win in football. A sporting victory may, of course,

seem meaningless, particularly when juxataposed with economic difficulty. However, over time the victory has become rhetorically imbued with meaning, such that authors such as Millman and Coyne can hint that the victories meant something beyond a sports team getting a trophy. By attaching the team to the sense of civic identity and claiming that their performance on the field was a performance that reflected the city, the team's success is vicariously positioned at the city's success. The ethics of blue collar activity were therefore allowed to emerge as rhetorically victorious in a social, perhaps even moral, sense despite the fact that blue-collar jobs were permanently vanishing from a practical economic standpoint.

This perception of the Steelers as blue-collar, and therefore tough and admirable, appears outside of the Steelers fandom. In Longman's book about the Eagles, thoracic surgeon named Rodney Landreneau merged the idea of economics and a particular style of play, claiming that the Steelers "[have] got that hard-nosed attitude… it fits that steel industry mentality. People identify with linebackers and offensive linemen. Their passion is knocking somebody out. The Eastern European influence is tremendously large. These folks are tough people"" (Longman 2005, 73). Discussions of the Steelers during their Super Bowls likewise often mention such adjectives in describing the team and its history, often in the context of extolling its virtues. A Huffington Post article called the most recent Packers-Steelers Super Bowl the "Blue Collar Bowl," a "war between two blue collar teams oozing with tradition" (Liguori 2011), a CNN article about the team was titled "Packers, Steelers steeped in success, blue-collar roots" (McLaughlin 2011), and even in the United Kingdom, the *Telegraph* called it the teams "as blue-collar as they

come… the 45th installment of America's grandest sporting showpiece represents no less than a battle for the nation's soul" (Brown 2011). Again, in Bormann's terms, the fantasy of a connection between blue-collar ethic and violent defensive play, has chained up and they are perceived to be somehow related, a product of one another. The understanding of the ethics attached to such an arrangement is more complex, however; for some it is admirable preservation of proper masculinity that has fallen under threat. For others, it is a barbaric relic, an overly-aggressive and inappropriate style of play. The Cowboys Blog "Blue Star Struck" including a blog entry articulating one such opinion. Entitled "The Steelers: Blue Collar "Class" Or…" and opened with the writer Josh Bradley claiming:

> in my opinon its more like blue collar trash I mean we all remember James Harrison in the Super Bowl holding down the Cardinals player and beating him and we all remember Hines Ward's "Blocks" which both cases equal trash and bad sportsmanship in my opinion [sic] (Bradley 2009)

Just as Bale suggests that a stadium may be a place of topophilia for one group and a place of topophobia for another (Bale 1992), perceptions regarding styles of play and their ethics are likewise in the eye of the beholder. David Fleming, and ESPN writer, likewise presented a more complex picture right before Supwer Bowl XLV in 2011, in his column "Skeletons Hiding in Steelers' Closet" where he suggested that:

> The Pittsburgh Steelers are the greatest franchise in sports…They also might be one of the dirtiest. It's something we all might want to consider over the next 10 days as a nation of pundits blather on about the wholesome, blue-collar, old-fashioned, long-lost American goodness that the Steelers (or any other sports teams) represent (Fleming 2011)

The complexities of the team, Fleming argues, are sometimes glossed over in favor of the more positive blue-collar mythos. However, as Fleming's column itself demonstrates, the

checkered past of the team and the sometimes ambiguous nature of its style of play reatain their possibility of producing anxiety.

The concerns about the blue-collar ethics and its connections to violent play continue to recirculate. Currently, there are debates within the NFL about the method of defensive play and whether some hard hits ought to be banned out of concern for injury. During the 2010-11 playing season, Steeler's player James Harrison fell under particular fire for his method of playing the game and was repeatedly fined for his blows. One particular piece of NFL Legislation was dubbed the "Pittsburgh Steelers Rule" and the team in general was held up as an example of the type of play that the NFL was seeking to regulate. Reactions to this legislation was varied. Based on the increasing evidence of brain injuries being done to players over the course of their play, some applauded the move as a necessary step to make the game safe. However, many complained that such moves to regular were eliminating what made football football, and emasculating it. This complaint frequently not only involved a lament about the state of football in general, but also unfavorable comparisons to other sports, Troy Polamalu, one of the Steelers' most prominent and popular players, claimed that "If people want to watch soccer, they can watch soccer. The people who are attracted to this game, they're going to see the big hits, they don't care about touchdowns…you're also taking apart what attracts people to this game" (Chase 2010). The Steelers' position at the center of the controversy has and continues to reinforce certain perceptions of the team. Efforts to change the game also give rise to more of the nostalgia so attached to the Steelers. The changes are seen as

threatening the game's tradition, a tradition which the Steelers are seen as either bravely or obstinately maintaining in the face of fines and criticism.

### *Conclusion*

The economic dimension of the Steeler's fandom provides a significant amount of cohesion for the group's identity. By framing the movement of the people out of the city as a type of economic diaspora, there is a sense that there exists an impulse to both define and legitimize the economic hardships which occurred. Because of the concurrent success of the team, the team was positioned as being integral to the community's cohesiveness in several ways. Because the team could be cheered for from anywhere, being a Steelers fan became a type of shorthand for civic identity. It provided a series of identifiers, some of which willl be discussed more in depth in the next chapter, which community members could use to provide cohesiveness. The team also provided a way to transpose and preserve the economic identity of the city, in the name and playing style of the players. By positioning them as a "blue collar" team, the team was able to capture and recirculate, through continued coverage and broadcasts, the nostalgia for the economic reality that gradually vanished. It was also able to construct an argument for a type of masculinity that has been persistently in tension, attaching the idea of violent play as one more part of a blue-collar identity and permitting such violence as crucial to that identity's maintenance. The team, and the NFL in general, also provided a way for the city to construct a series of "others" against which the Steelers and the city could be defined and the identity preserved. Through the process of "othering" a sense of identity

became more distinct, defined by the characteristics of other cities and teams the community was in opposition to in addition to what characteristics the community actually embodied.

The nature of sport and sports coverage means that some of the sophistication in many of the circumstances that the media discusses get lost. Not every person who moved away from Pittsburgh, for instance, would have been a Steelers fan, though they might have retained nostalia for the city. The connection that some experience to the city might be weak, even if they cheer for the team. The economic realities of living in Pittsburgh during the 1970s and the problems that the city dealt with get hazed over by the gloss of nostalgia. However, the fantasies that did chain up and become the dominant discourses contain a number of powerful messages, including the diasporic idea of a group forced to leave and the nostalgic conception of a population longing to return. These fantasies of community and identity also continue to influence behavior. As Atkinson repeatedly pointed out, people who are fans of the team frequently meet in real life and interact with one another. To some degree, technology has facilitated these meetings, both in space and cyberspace as fans can view one another on screens or interact with each other online. Nevertheless, space and spatial hierarchies, in which the city and the staidum are the ultimate goals, remain crucial to the ways in which the community interacts. Such spaces provide havens for fan performance, where excess for the team may be excused, nostalgia for the city may be indulged, and the communal identity of the fans, with some (if not all) of its economic and social complexities, may be rearticulated and reinscribed.

## Chapter 2: Politics, Religion and Sport: The "Terrible Towel" as Symbol

As the previous section discussed, many of the discourses surrounding the Pittsburgh Steelers draw upon other discourses, including those of politics, economy, and masculinity. The Terrible Towel is one particular artifact which further illuminates connections between these discourses since construction of the Towel and its meaning draws upon several of them. Invented by Myron Cope as a "gimmick," (Cope 2002, 147) the Terrible Towel is a sporting artifact associated with the Steelers that has, over the years, taken on both a pseudo-religious and a pseudo-nationalistic significance and functions in ways which draw upon both of those traditions for fans of the team. The ways in which fans overtly and knowingly construct this mythology yet at the same time give credence to this mythologization suggests both an awareness of the Towel as constructed symbol and a need to have such symbols in operation, even if they are recognized as such. The Towel's similarity to a flag in form and use lends itself to co-option as an informal flag and demonstrates the cohesion that even a constructed identity can have using objects as markers. The quasi-religious aspect derives from a number of discourses as well, including the Towel's ability to "hex" people of other teams who demonstrate disrespect towards it. And throughout its creation and its use, the Towel's ability to resist popular critiques of commodification allows it greater freedom to function symbolically. Overall I will connect this mythologization of the Towel to the desire for community and the need for symbols to construct and represent the community.

### *The Towel as Totem*

In his analysis of Durkheim and sport, James McBride turns to Durkheim for an explanation of fandom. Per McBride, when sports fans act collectively:

> The very suspension of individuality yields an infectious euphoria…which endows the fan with a seemingly irresistible strength. By becoming a member of the collectivity, by becoming a fan, the individual is recognized as having the authority to wield that power, to become a conduit of collective triumph. To do so in the context of American football, as in aboriginal religious ritual, one need only identify oneself with the totemic representation of the clan or team. (McBride 2001, 126)

Though not the only symbol of the Steelers, the Terrible Towel functions as a totem in ways similar to the ones Durkheim (and McBride, drawing on Durkheim) outlines. The Towel does not function as a towel in terms of the purposes for which a towel might normally be considered and a towel is not an inherently religious object. Instead, the religiosity of the Towel derives from its use as an object which brings the community together in ritual and which carries, for the community, some manner of weight. When used in the 'ceremony' of the game and through its association with the team, it provides cohesion for the community and gives the community some sense of both identity and power.

One common use of the Terrible Towel is in a semi-baptismal metaphor, whereby being given (and often clothed in) a towel represents entrance to the community. The Terrible Towel had been marketed specifically to children, including a miniaturized child's version of the Towel called the "Terrible Toddler Towel" that comes in both towel and bib form. The use of the Towel in place of a conventional religious object

emphasizes the propensity of sport's fandoms to co-opt and even use to excess other ideas and discourses, playfully but with purpose. The inversion of the religious ceremony parodies the ceremony to some extent, but the weight of the ceremony also gives meaning to the use of the Towel. Even if it is playful, it is the signifier of community belonging and thus serves, in some sense, the same purpose as the baptismal gown or other such object. The use of the Towel in place of a quotidian item such as a 'normal' bib does not necessarily play upon these discourses as strongly. But it does exemplify another complex aspect of sports fandom, the idea of excess. By allowing sports to merge with the everyday, the fan identity is seen as undivorced from everyday life – the community extends beyond the field and there is no age too young for a child to become part of that community.

This idea of the Towel as a marker for entrance to the community extends beyond marketing. An exchange occurred on the blog "Joey Porters Pit Bulls" in an entry "The Terrible Towel Is Out of This World" in which a poster under the pseudonym Lori claimed:

> My friend who isn't from pittsburgh [sic] remarked during the AFC championship, "What the hell is up with the terrible towel? There are so many."
> To which I told him, "Everybody in Pittsburgh owns one. It's what they wrap you in when you're born and they send you home from the hospital in it. I was born in Pittsburgh, I should know. And I still have my towel." (Lori 2009)

The author of the blog replied "It is deemed in Scripture: "And the baby shall be wrapped in swaddling Terrible Towel [sic]"" (Joey Porter's Pit Bulls 2009), making a play on the

Gospel of Luke that once more reinforces the humorous use of the Towel in a pseudo-religious fashion. In the introduction to *The Best Pittsburgh Sport Arguments*, John Menho claims that "Being a Pittsburgh sports fan is a lifelong commitment. It starts when Mom and Dad proudly wrap the baby in that first Terrible Towel" (Mehno 2007, xi). Mehno would go on to label the Towel "Pittsburgh's Most Endearing Sports Quirk" (Mehno 2007, 286-289). In an NFL.com video called "Steeler Nation" that was also included on the "NFL Super Bowl XLIII: Pittsburgh Steelers Champions" DVD, the video narrator semi-rhetorically asked "So when exactly does someone become an official member of Steeler Nation?" ("Steeler Nation" 2009). Several people claimed it was from birth and several framed the event in terms of reception of the Towel: "When you're born in western Pennsylvania, you get a birth certificate and a Terrible Towel…I grew up teething on a Terrible Towel…When I was born, my dad wrapped me up in a Terrible Towel and that was pretty much the story" ("Steeler Nation" 2009). The current mayor of Pittsburgh, Luke Ravenstahl, also added to the idea of Terrible Towel ownership from birth: "I have a son who's three months old…He was born on a Friday the Steelers played Monday night against the Washington Redskins, dressed him up in his Steeler outfit, had the Terrible Towel there in front of him" ("Steeler Nation" 2009). As McBride claims, "[b]y being born into the clan or "raised a fan" of a particular team, the individual is constituted by identification with the totemic symbol of the group" (McBride 2001, 127). The Towel does not have to be used in the way that it is at games in order to carry symbolic weight; the mere presence of the towel is all that is necessary to signify meaning.

In each of these circumstances, the Towel is constructed as the *specific* item of sports memorabilia that signifies access to the community, an outward indication that the child is a part of the fan community. Furthermore, a number of the anecdotes describe being 'wrapped' in the Terrible Towel, terminology reminiscent of not only the blankets given at hospitals[2] but also christening blankets, which are not simply used to wrap up a child, but used to signify the child's entrance into a particular community. The blog description even makes a playful comparison to the Gospel infancy narratives, once more playing with religious terminology in ways that are simultaneously serious and parodic. The religious metaphor is even further suggested later in the "Steeler Nation" clip when one woman declared that watching the Steelers play is "like going to church on Sunday. It just gives you a renewed feeling" ("Steeler Nation" 2009). The connection between sports and religion has been made by several authors (Prebish 1993, Price 2001). It is therefore unsurprising that a piece of memorabilia even somewhat resembling a religious object might be co-opted to signify membership in a way reminiscent of religious functionality. Of course, the actual evidence of people wrapping up their children in Terrible Towels would be difficult to gauge, and would necessarily rely on anecdotal postings rather than any comprehensive evaluation of newborns born to Steelers fans. However, the circulation of such a discourse, defining the idea of how being a Steelers fan happens and connecting it to a religious ceremony of belonging, demonstrates the Towel's role at least conceptually, as a symbol which gets its value in relationship to the

[2] An number of NBC stations in a story entitled "Steeler Fans from the Womb" reported on a hospital wrapping newborns in Terrible Towels, prior to Super Bowl XLIII ("Steelers Fans from the Womb 2009)

community and from what it signifies to the community as Durkheim suggests that other religious symbols do. Yet the obvious disjuncture between the Towel and a traditional defined religious symbol once again brings in the idea that is a form of parody, a joke between fans which nevertheless tries to convey a sincere commitment to community and place.

### *The Terrible Towel as Hex*

In addition to being a symbol functioning along semi-religious lines to signify baptismal access to a community and possibly other religious functions, the Terrible Towel has also served as a type of totem acting in a dual role as an object that will assist the Steelers and, when it is defiled, will punish the other team. McBride suggests that the team as totem is powerful in general, claiming that "even though the attributes of a "Steeler"…identified with workers who have exercised limited social power in American history—may not be comparable to the mythic powers of natural creatures or legendary figures, the totem nevertheless exercises an equivalent power in the imagination of the fans, no matter what name is chosen" (McBride 127, 2001) Myron Cope (in a much less academic fashion) remarked on a similar function of power regarding his creation. Though he disavowed the second, more malicious, imagining of the towel, he still remarked on its potency, framing his creation thus:

> Is not an instrument of witchcraft… It is not a hex upon the enemy. The towel is a positive force that lifts the Steelers to magnificent heights - and poses mysterious difficulties for the Steelers' opponents only if need be. Many have told me that the Terrible Towel brought them good fortune, but I can't guarantee that sort of thing

> because the Steelers, after all, are the towel's primary concern. Still, at the least, the symbol of the Terrible Towel will serve as a memento of your having been part of the Steelers' Dynasty and if it causes good things to happen to you, so much the better. (Cope "Pittsburgh Steelers")

Nevertheless, the idea of the Towel as an item that can 'curse' has gained enough currency within the fandom that the idea of the curse currently has its own Wikipedia page. When a member of the Tennessee Titans stomped on the towel and the team then proceeded to lose a long stretch of games, an informal poll taken on a Pittsburgh area news site showed 82% of those responding 'believed' in the curse [Figure 7: WTAE Poll on the Terrible Towel].

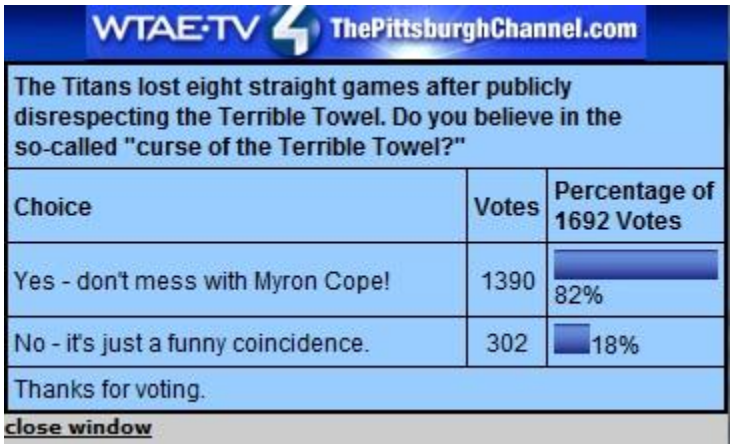


Figure 7: WTAE Poll on the Terrible Towel

The poll was not scientific and not, perhaps, indicative of the feelings of the entire fanbase. However, it does demonstrate that, contrary to Cope's claims, the idea of the Towel as a hexing item is one that enjoys at least some popularity and belief, enough so that fans make claims of its impending wrath whenever the towel is somehow defamed and they proceed to claim that any subsequent misfortune of the player insulting the

Towel, the team, or the city is due in part to the Towel's influence. The agreement with the poll only serves to reinforce such claims; the overwhelming amount of people voting 'yes' suggests that the community is not wrong to think thusly, that others do also. This performative consent can strengthen such perceptions and potentially legitimize such beliefs – a belief does not seem to strange if others espouse it, and if the community overwhelmingly espouses it, it may be a crucial belief. This element of community may make belief in such ideas important because they offer a sense of community rather than because there is validity to such beliefs. In other words, it becomes important to believe because the community believes and believing reinforces participation in the community, not because the belief is demonstrably true.

However, whatever such ideas might contribute to the cohesion of the fanbase and their beliefs about the power of fan objects, the notion of the Towel as hex is not limited to Pittsburgh's fans. In an article on the Towel right before Super Bowl XLIII, ESPN columnist Greg Garber noted

> And what of those who disrespect the towel? History is littered with casualties. In 2005, Cincinnati receiver T.J. Houshmandzadeh wiped his feet with a Terrible Towel after scoring a touchdown. The Bengals won the game, but the Steelers extracted their revenge, beating Cincinnati in the playoffs during their road to Super Bowl XL. After Ravens receiver Derrick Mason jumped on the towel before a September 2008 matchup, Baltimore lost all three of its games against Pittsburgh. For those looking for an omen, consider this: On Monday, Phoenix mayor Phil Gordon pretended to blow his nose in the Terrible Towel and then threw it to the ground. (Garber 2009)

This discourse relies in part on the conception of the Towel as flag, an idea to be discussed in the next section. However, it also demonstrates at least a professed belief in

power attached to a symbol, an idea that in Bormann's terms has chained up to the national media of ESPN, talked about as a prevailing discourse. There are also totemic overtones to this characterization of the Towel. When discussing the sacredness of the totem, Durkheim observes the idea that whoever damages[3] the sacred object will be punished and that "It is not that the group always intervenes to punish this infraction artificially; it is believed that the sacrilege produces death automatically" (Durkheim 1965, 150). The punishment the Towel supposedly metes out is not nearly as dramatic. However, it follows the pattern of belief that Durkheim outlines – the Steelers and their fans do not need to act in defense of the Towel, the Towel will exact its own punishment for its defacement.

Like the discussion of many curses in popular culture, there is a question about how serious such a belief is and other teams often laugh at or dismiss the possibility of the Towel being able to literally curse, even mocking those who do for taking it so 'seriously.' Yet it is doubtful that even for those who do frame it as an actual curse and who would agree that a team's misfortune is due to the Towel, that the majority of those would claim to otherwise believe in hexes or similar notions. However, to not be *serious* in such a belief does not mean that the belief is not a *sincere* one. At the moment of saying that something happened because of the Towel, there is little reason to believe that the attribution of misfortune to the power of the Towel is a lie; instead, it is mentally categorized differently from other aspects of mystical or religious belief. There are

[3] Although it should be noted that Durkheim's notion of the sacred and violation also rests on ideas of touching or consumption, behaviors which are less malicious and more to preserve other aspects of sacristy, such as scarcity.

permissible divides between fan behavior and other notions of religion or rationality. In some sense, fandom is the perpetual carnival, in which absurdity and inversion may exist while outside of the fandom a more rational series of beliefs takes over. Expressing the power and potency of the Towel in religious terms is not a contradiction; it is rather something else, using the discourses of religion yet conceptually distinct from it. These totemic discourses demonstrate the way in which the Towel as a sporting object partially functions, deriving its power from old notions of hexes playfully but meaningfully recirculated. And again, the meaning is, at least in part, a social one, as it relies on the idea of the Towel as representing and defending the honor of the community.

### *The Towel as Flag*

The idea of the Terrible Towel as the 'flag' of the Steeler Nation enjoys wide circulation among Steeler's fans. In a January 2009 ESPN article, Greg Garber quoted Troy Polamalu, a well-known Pittsburgh player, claiming "I think every great nation has a flag…I think the Steeler Nation, it's obvious that that's our flag" (Garber 2009). One again returning to *The Best Pittsburgh Sport Arguments,* Mehno claims that the Terrible Towel "has become a universal symbol of Pittsburgh sports fandom, a flag that has flown all over the world in support of teams wearing black and gold" (Mehno 2007, 179). In an Associated Press article, Dan Nephin claimed that "Over the years the Terrible Towel has become a symbolic flag of sorts, embracing Steeler Nation and Pittsburgh, no matter how far from Heinz Field and Pittsburgh its citizens may be. And like a flag, people don't like to see it disrespected" (Nephin 2009). Nephin's observation, captioning a shot of Steelers

fans waving their Towels, succinctly states many of the ways in which the Towel operates as a flag for the Steelers in a pseudo-national, playful fashion: fans claim that the Towel represents a population (even if all members are not in a particular place), and that it represents a particular place no matter where it is shown

Part of the Towel's use as a flag rests in its alleged ability to represent the city and, in doing so, make connections between community members who identify with the city but no longer reside within it. Mehno, speaking of this connective ability, claims that "It's become a universal symbol for all things Pittsburgh. Hang one on your from porch in Nebraska and you'll immediately identify yourself to others as a Pittsburgh fan. Don't be surprised if a kindred spirit shows up with some Iron City some Sunday afternoon" (Mehno 2007, 289)[4]. Robert Dvorchak, a writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, suggested that the Towel "serv[es] as proof of citizenship for tribal members in other cities" (Dvorchak "NFL's plans" 2009), a connection that speaks to the Towel's use and the way it is conceived of by some in terms which echo anthropology. Part of the purpose of any fandom is to create a community, and there is acknowledgement within the Steelers' fandom that the Terrible Towel is a significant and recognizable marker of membership in that community. Just as the city provided identity, so too does the Towel provide an identity for those who display it. In many ways, because of the Towel's

[4] Iron City is a Pittsburgh microbrew. While the company has since been bought out, it is still heavily associated with Pittsburgh such that Steelers bars outside of Pittsburgh sometimes carry it particularly to cater to fans. The connection between the team, the city and the beer is evidence that food is part of this nexus of identity as well, and might carry quasi-religious connotations similar to the Towel's, given the ritualization of consumption of certain specific types of food and the ways in which this echoes religious ceremonies, particularly those such as Mass, which have a meal (including the consumption of alcohol) as a focal ritual.

connection to the city, it is the rehabilitation of that original identity that is occurring, a reconstruction happening through a symbol rather than proximate location in a place.

The need for the Towel as a symbol of the city that provides some connection to other fans taps into another discourse that widely circulates within the Steelers fandom, the idea that the fandom was split up by the economic forces that damaged that city during the nation's industrial decline. Charles McCollester, a professor of labor relations at the Indiana University of Pennsylvania called the item "the Terrible Towel of memory. It's a deeply significant totem that we carry as Pittsburghers" ("Steelers Nation" 2006). As previously discussed, the idea that there is a common language unique to Pittsburgh (Johnstone 2009) and a common form of media consumption relates back to Anderson's idea of the "imagined community," as these were some of qualities he gave for the formation of the nation (Anderson 2006). There is a type of mimicry that is, as with the religious practice, not serious but sincere, defining itself in nationalist terms without literally being a separate political entity with political agency (though the extent of social or economic agency might be arguable). For any group identifying itself in such nationalist terms, a flag would be a logical symbol to create and use. And in a way, the production of a flag in tandem with nationalist terminology creates a cycle – because it is a nation it must have a flag, because it has a 'flag' the group can more easily be conceived of as a nation.

Susan Birrell suggests that "sport can be understood as a significant aspect of society because of the ritualistic overtones it possesses… sports is a legacy of ritual" (Birrell 1981, 354) and McBride suggests that the "passions of football bear all the

markings of a ritual at a religious site or temple" (McBride 2001, 125). However, it is not only the ritual in sport that makes it sociological. As McBride also indicates, the "collectivity therefore lives in and through its members or fans and, likewise, the individual lives in and through totemic identification" (McBride 2001, 127), suggesting that the fandom itself bears similarities to Durkheim's clan, a body whose members identify with one another yet whose associations are ultimately loose and whose body has no head. Durkheim suggests that within religion, the symbol functions as an item that the group can fixate upon, that produces the unity of the group. According to Durkheim:

> The clan is a society which is less able than any other to do without an emblem or symbol, for there is almost no other so lacking in consistency. The clan cannot be defined by its chief, for if central authority is not lacking, it is at least uncertain and unstable. Nor can it be defined by the territory it occupies, for the population, being nomad is not closely attached to any special locality… the unity of the group is visible, therefore, only in the collective name borne by all the members, and in the equally collective emblem reproducing the object designated by this name (Durkheim 1965, 265)

The Steelers and their fandom are not as reliant on the clan Durkheim describes. The fandom existed before the Towel did as the symbol grew out of the fandom and Durkheim's suggestion that "Take away the name and the sign which materializes it, and the clan is no longer representable" (Durkheim 1965, 265) may not necessarily hold true. The Steelers could be said to have leadership, in the form of the owners and the coaches. However, the fandom as a whole does not have one person to head it – it is a much looser association than that. And while it does attach itself to place, the Towel and the community are rather emulating the presence of a place that once was. Discourses about the city and the community being split apart suggest that though it once might have been

true, there is no longer any ‘territory’ for all ‘Pittsburghers’ to occupy. And again, the Towel taps into these discourses, as it is suggested multiple times that it is the Towel which signifies the unity of the city and that the Towel has some ability to bring people together – that it is the displaying of the Towel which makes a person approachable as a fellow fan and instantly grants some type of common ground. The reiteration of the

The Towel also plays a role in the ceremony of the game itself. A few years after inventing the Towel, Myron Cope discussed the process of that invention, including part of what made the Towel so successful as an item:

> Not long ago, Dan Rooney, the president of the Pittsburgh Steelers, handed me a copy of *Sports Business—The Management Newsletter for Sports Money Makers*. He pointed to an item he knew would interest me. Under the advisory "Watch for Fans," *Sports Business* confided to the moguls who subscribe to it: "Special, almost unclassifiable gimmicks like the Steelers' 'Terrible Towel' are a fan turn-on. The keys to the most successful of these devices seem to be 1) Color and 2) Motion. Crowds dressed in the same color clothing can make an impact, but it is passive. Color plus motion in the stands creates a kind of framework for the contest itself, making the entire experience more memorable for the spectator (Cope “True Tales” 1979)

The success of the Terrible Towel may also connect not merely to color and movement, but to the psychological effects of flags. In his discussion of ‘flag power, Robert Shanafelt goes beyond Durkheim’s construction of flags as being given significance through the communities they represent and suggests that “flag displays may tap into our psychological natures” (Shanafelt 2009, 13). He eventually claims “flag-raising rituals to be types of dominance displays” (Shanafelt 2009, 25) connected with primate behaviors and that “the flags around which the patriotic rally appear to evoke more than just what is

learned through socialization" (Shanafelt 2009, 26). The suggestion that the emotions evoked by flags inherently tie into dominance meshes well with the 'ritual' use of the Terrible Towel at football games.

Talk about the Towel in sports articles or programs often includes a mention of the ability of the Towel to turn the stadium yellow, sometimes accompanied by language suggesting invasion. In a November 2009 article, Robert Dvorchak of the Post-Gazette spoke of the Steelers taking over Arrowhead Stadium when playing the Chiefs, saying that "The fan base openly unfurls its towels and battle flags to rename whatever enemy territory with a simple proclamation: You're In Steelers Country" (Dvorchak "Steelers Nation" 2009). Woody Paige, writing for the Denver Post, claimed that once the Broncos started losing and their fans left late in the fourth quarter, "All who remained were Women & Men In Black waving the Terrible Towels in victory…the Steal City [sic] can snatch a stadium as well as the Continental Army captured Fort Ticonderoga" (Paige 2009). In his introduction to the NFL film "Steelers Nation," Steve Sabol claimed "No team has ever played the Super Bowl in its home stadium. But at Super Bowl XL in Detroit, with 50,000 Terrible Towel waving, I sure felt like I was at Heinz Field in Pittsburgh" ("Steelers Nation" 2006), making a play on the city's industry and his perceived theft of the space of the stadium. The constant theme of presence suggests that the Towel as flag represents the dominance displays discussed in Shanafelt by implicating an overwhelming community presence. In this way, the Towel functions as a method of reclaiming space through the demonstration of both color and motion, as the

article Cope quoted suggests, connected to deep impulses that the Towel, like a flag, seems to encourage.

The use of the Towel in photographs likewise supports these impulses, both of recreating community and of pseudo-conquering. When this intersects with technology, it can demonstrate a particular method of community building. In her analysis of the Florida Gator Nation, Rebecca Watts remarks that "online sports discussion sites… empower fans through opportunities to become community builders" (Watts 2008, 256). The use of the Terrible Towel online is evocative of such community building, as it offers as visual way for the community to substantiate itself as vast and dispersed. Sites which display 'Towel pictures' taken at various landmarks around the world can include message board threads for posting such pictures and media outlets such as TV stations or newspapers which may ask people to send in their pictures. These pictures taken with the Towel are also suggestive of flag power, with the Towel symbolically unfurled to indicate the scope, and potentially the potency, of the nation. These sites may be personal, such as Michael Moses' Terrible Towel Tour, which can be found at http://michaelmoses.jalbum.net/The-Towel/, features Michael Moses displaying his Towel across the globe at various landmarks including the Coliseum, the Vatican, the Arc de Triomphe, and Radio City Music Hall [Figure 9: Michael Moses' Terrible Towel Tour]. Per the blurb on Moses' now-defunct Picasa site [Figure 8: Moses' Blurb]

> The Terrible Towel is an iconic image of Pittsburgh, PA. It symbolizes much more than the black and gold- it symbolizes a city, its people, and the attitude of Wester (sic) Pennsylvania. In the spring of 2010 while studying abroad in Florence, Italy, I promised myself that I would attempt to get to every major

landmark across Europe with my Terrible Towel. From now on, wherever I go in this world, The Towel is coming with me... (Moses 2010)


Figure 8: Moses' Blurb

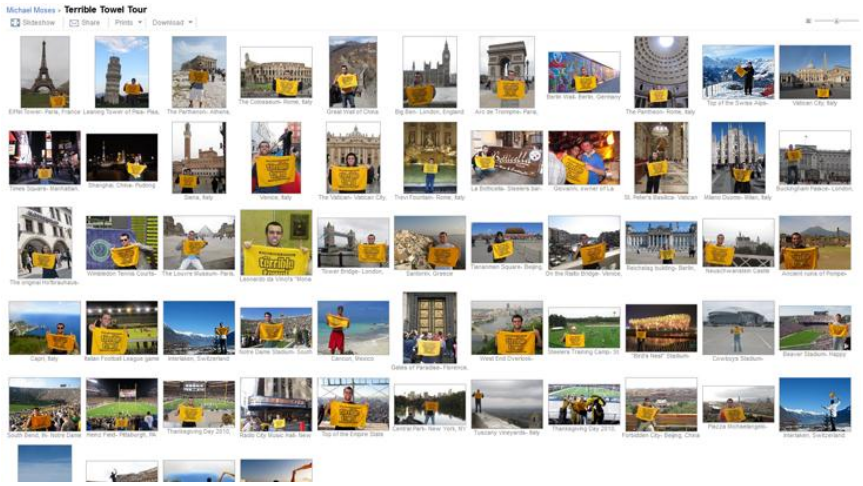


Figure 9: Michael Moses' Terrible Towel Tour

One particular example which attracted attention beyond the Steelers, or even the sporting, community was astronaut Mike Fincke's excursion into space from which he broadcast a video displaying the Towel and declaring the International Space Station to

be “Steelers Country” (Garber 2009) [Figure 10: Mike Fincke and his Terrible Towel on board the International Space Station].

Figure 10: Mike Fincke and his Terrible Towel on board the International Space Station

Before Super Bowl 45, the idea of the Terrible Towel as a community-building symbol gained a participatory aspect beyond self-posted photographs. Using a fan motor, a hand apparatus, a Terrible Towel, and some coding, a few technology-savvy Steelers fans created the “Twerrible Towel” [Figure 11: The Twerrible Towel], a Terrible Towel, shown on a video feed on http://twerribletowel.com/, that would spin each time somebody on Twitter made a new post with the hashtag #steelernation [Figure 12: How the Twerrible Towel Works].


Figure 11: The Twerrible Towel

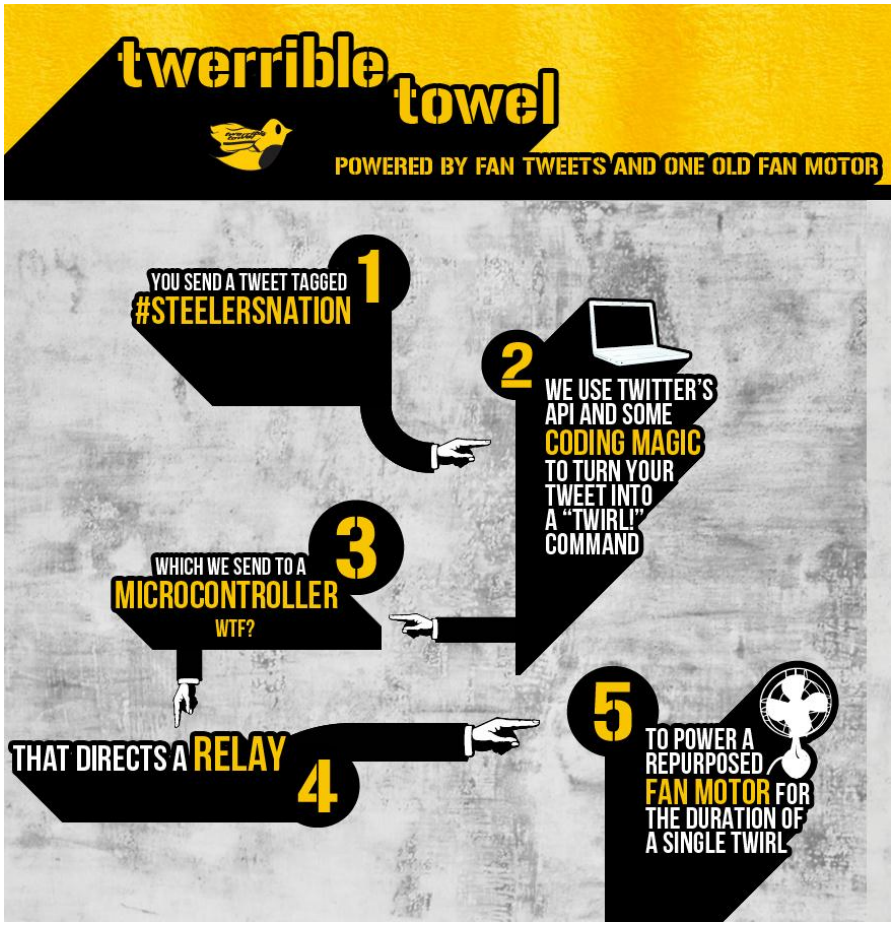


Figure 12: How the Twerrible Towel Works

The intersection of technology and audience participation was visualized in a constantly relayed stream, using technology as way to draw together the community of fans in a using a particular type of action, the twirling of the Towel, which, for the fans involved, held a particular type of meaning, invoking the twirling that happens in the stadium to signify spatial dominance and to provide communal support for the team. Twirling the Towel with a tweet was a way to vicariously convey the same message of support and community participation, using technology to bridge the gap of a stadium presence that was geographically (since the game was elsewhere) and temporally (since the game was not happening at that time) lacking for Steelers fans.

The Towel's use as a flag likewise has some religious intersections. When Myron Cope died, his wife Elizabeth "draped his coffin with a quilt that a fan had made out of Terrible Towels" (Branch 2009), a spot more commonly reserved for an American flag. And when a moment of silence was observed for Cope's passing, Terrible Towels were waved in tribute. Once again, the Towel was brought into a religious ceremony to take the spot of a different object with similar meanings, suggesting that the Towel does have meaning even if it evades the gravity of the symbols it is replacing (such as the American flag) and even if the spread of such significance is somewhat limited to those who take the fandom seriously enough to allow for such a substitution.

### *The Economy of the Terrible Towel*

Part of the professed reason for using a Towel as an object of team pride was accessibility. When Myron Cope first "invented" the Towel during the 1975 playoffs, it

was not marketed by the Steelers (though the marketing of the 'official' Towel proceeded rather quickly, becoming available the year after). Instead, Cope suggested that people bring Towels from home, reasoning that they were an object everybody would have or that would be easy to get if they didn't have one already. The original purpose, or at least the purpose as Cope related it, was to provide something to bolster the morale of the team, rather than to come up with something to market in and of itself. In the years since the Towel's invention, its relationship to commercialization has been similarly ambivalent. In addition to the numerous versions of the Towel that have been marketed, the original black and gold design has appeared on dozens of licensed products, including ties, jewelry, blankets, scarves and flags. The Towels are widely vended, at games, online, and in stores around the city. However, despite the ubiquity of the Towel as a marketed item, its price is currently $7.95, relatively inexpensive compared to other items often retailed to fans such as apparel, including jerseys. Though it has been commercialized and officially marketed, among fan items it remains accessible. This combination of cost and marketing helped to make the Towel common. Because the Towel is something widely sold and easily affordable, it does not present a significant bar as a symbol of access and is not limited to stadium-going fans the way something like season tickets might be.

The continued marketing of the Towel has also managed to reshape the consumer-product relationship through Cope's decision to donate the profits of the Towel to charity. Yet despite this ostensible charity, there are still ways in which the Towel and its production can be problematic. George Sage speaks of the traditional merchandizing of

sports “the paradox that exists within the cultural industry of professional sports teams – an industry that does to great lengths to foster an industry-wide image of All-Amercanism and patriotism, but whose licensed merchandise is largely manufactured in foreign counties by exploited labor” (Sage 1996, 1). According to Sage, part of the purpose of such merchandise to get consumers “to think of pro sports as emblematic of Americanism and patriotism, which are deeply felt, extremely popular cultural values” (Sage 1996, 4). Sage’s idea of sports merchandise intending to represent some aspect of larger social and political values translates on a more local scale to the Towel. While the Towel may be a signifier, precisely what it signifies is not stable. However, the regard in which the Towel is held indicates a nebulous yet omnipresent connection between the Towel and values, ostensibly held by Cope, the Steelers, and Pittsburgh, and reinforced and recirculated by the Towel. If, in Sage’s argument, pro sports signifies “Amercanism and patriotism,” the Towel does likewise on a microscale in relations to the city of Pittsburgh. It is also implicated in some the criticisms that Sage has regarding other sports products. Though some Towel merchandise is manufactured in the United States, much is not. The raw materials also come from elsewhere and the items which bear the Towel’s image are likewise manufactured in other places. Thus, Sage’s critique seems relevant, particularly in the contradiction between Pittsburgh as a city devastated by economic relocation and its representation via a Towel whose construction is not exclusively located local.

However, the donation of the revenue generated by the Towel successfully allows the production of the Towel to avoid the type of scrutiny Sage suggests. In 1996, Cope

gave the rights to the Towel and all its profits to the Allegheny Valley School, a school for the mentally handicapped where Cope's Autistic son Daniel resides (Garber 2009). These connections to charity have been noted in multiple articles in the popular media (Branch 2009, Dvorchak "The Terrible Towel" 2009), including an ABC News report about the Towel's charitable associations in which it was suggested that "If they gave out a Most Valuable Tchotchke award, it would have to go to the Pittsburgh Steelers' Terrible Towel" (Maggin 2009). The association with charity has appeared outside of the press as well, as in Freddie Fu's Presidential Address to the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine, wherein he pointed to the Towel as an example of the good that could be done through such an object. At the end of an anecdote describing the history of the Towel and its donation of copyright, he exhorted his audience "Much can be accomplished and much can be given back – even with something as simple and ordinary as a towel! So, with a towel as our inspiration, maybe each of us could come up with a way to give back" (Fu 2009, 2312). The focus on the Towel's economic value in the media is persistently associated with its charity, often citing figures for how much the Towel has given to the AVS (Associated Press 2006) and preventing any contradictions in this discourse from coming to light.

Finally, there is an aspect of economy related to the perceived authenticity of the Terrible Towel. It has already been discussed how the Terrible Towel is valued in multiple ways, as a symbol in multiple senses for the Steelers' fan community. However, there is also an issue of having other Towels to contend with. On each level that the Towel is respected for Pittsburgh fans, so too are other Towels dismissed. As discussed,

part of the connection to the Towel's authenticity comes from its selectively constructed economic overtones. This provided the foundation for the criticism Bill Hillsgrove, a Pittsburgh broadcaster, gave to the "Trophy Towels" which the NFL marketed in the wake of the Steelers' sixth Super Bowl victory:

> I think he would be insulted. It's a shame…The towel had magic with Myron, and it's become a symbol of the Steeler Nation. Fans know their money is going to charity, and now this one is being sold for profit. I have an ethical problem with that. Like all the other towels that have surfaced out there, it's a cheap imitation... I think it's a dumb idea. It's a ripoff. A copycat. (Dvorchak "NFL's plans" 2009)

Dvorchak also quotes defensive player Chris Hoke as claiming "anything to make money, right? It's a money-making scheme… People aren't going to wave this towel. It's too big to wave" (Dvorchak "NFL's plans" 2009).[5] Like other criticisms of other 'copycats' there is a twofold economic critique – that the new product is worthless because it does not have the qualities that the 'true' towel does and is not useful, and that the new product is suspect because it is being sold for profit rather than being a donation to charity. Some of the imitation towels are given away, through promotions at various stadiums (Steinberg 2008). However, this does little to alter the perception of such towels or the economic disdain for them. While they are not dismissed as being a 'for-profit' venture, they are instead even more strongly constructed as worthless, an object that the team must impose upon its fans rather than allowing the fans to adopt the item themselves. The dismissal of these alternative towels is another necessary contribution to

[5] These quotes also circulated elsewhere (Vigna 2009), echoing the critiques.

the economy of the symbol. Part of the Towel's value and significance comes from its uniqueness, something that can only be preserved by insulating itself from derivatives.

### *Conclusion*

The Terrible Towel stands at the intersection of a number of discourses, merging them into one highly burdened symbol. Yet even those different threads – the idea of charity, of a flag, of a hex, of membership – all merge at the point of community representation. The Terrible Towel is an object easily visualized by media – it is portable so it can be photographed, it can be seen in stadiums and there is little mistaking what it is, it can be reproduced repeatedly onto other items of memorabilia (i.e. earrings in the shape of towels, shirts with the towel on them) and so on. The reasons why the Towel caught on likely include a combination of community, psychology and chance. However, the significance it has been constructed to bear demonstrates that since its invention, it has attained a function with strong "nationalist" and "religious" overtones. Some of these overtones are playful. However, that they are teasing or not as serious as other more traditionally national and religious symbols are does not mean that they are meaningless. Rather it is a different form speaking to a similarly necessary impulse, the need for community cohesion and representation in order to define and maintain the community. Sports can do this on its own; however, it is facilitated with an object like the Towel, on which the burden of community construction and representation can rest.

# Chapter 3: "The Band That Wouldn't Die": Spectating Loss

From their inception, the Baltimore Colts had a rough beginning. Named the Colts via a fan submission contest (Patterson 2000, 62), the team's moniker was evocative of the gambling and racing connections that the city had. The team was essentially founded twice, first in 1947 and then later in 1953 after the first team collapsed, only to be refounded a few years later with the movement of the Dallas Texans to Baltimore. Only a few years after this founding, the Colts would add Johnny Unitas to the team, after he was cut by the Pittsburgh Steelers. And within half a decade, the team would defeat the New York Giants in what would turn out to be an iconic football game that had a wide ranging impact on the sport and the city. Much later there would be a third shift in the team, when Robert Irsay would move the Colts to Indianapolis. The team that would eventually come to Baltimore, Art Modell's Browns, would be called the Ravens in homage to Edgar Allen Poe. Throughout this process, as the team grew, developed, and disbanded, its relationship with the city of Baltimore would be articulated in particular ways, and certain fantasy themes about the team would develop and chain. The overall theme was that of a city which relied upon its football team and that team's storied history to provide the city itself with a sense of civic pride and identity, needed to compare to the surrounding metropolises. The result of the move was that part of that identity had been taken away, and that it was a necessary component of identity that the city had to recuperate.

### *The 1958 Championship Game*

An early defining moment which became quickly integrated into Baltimore's fantasy theme rhetoric was the championship victory the Colts won, defeating the New York Giants in late December of 1958. William Gildea, in his book *When the Colts Belonged to Baltimore*, claimed "That game wed pro football to television" and that "it was a masterpiece in black and white seen by fifty million viewers" (Gildea 1996, 9). Michael Olesker, in *The Colts' Baltimore*, agrees that the game "was the moment that not only started pro football as the nation's game – it also changed television" (Olesker 2008, xii), eventually leading up to the cable channels and extended coverage that define football media today. The game itself was one which has conformed to some standard of excellence extending beyond the standard of simply winning a game (even an important one) in both Baltimore sports rhetoric and larger discussions of sports as the game has been recognized as one of the 'greatest' – or, as Frank Gifford titled his book, the "Glory Game." However, the impact of the game on promoting NFL within the American sporting psyche also importantly connects the significance of the game to an economic impetus. By providing the win which helped to cement the increasingly prosperous relationship of the NFL and television, the Baltimore Colts came to be framed by Baltimore as responsible, at least in part, for the ascension of the NFL to an economic powerhouse. Later on, this would in turn develop into a rhetoric of indebtedness, in which the NFL was somehow morally culpable for turning their backs upon the franchise responsible for giving rise to their success. However, even at its inception it was

powerfully figured as a way for the city to finally achieve some notoriety, despite any other shortcomings of the city.

The victory of the Baltimore Colts over the New York Giants was a significant moment in the history of the team and the way in which the team became a part of the city's identity. One member of the press describes the significance of beating New York, saying that "we went there with the idea that maybe, just maybe Baltimore, which then was viewed as pretty much of a traffic jam between Washington and New York, that maybe we could be looked at in a new light" (*The Band* 2010) Michael Olesker described the ways in which the city's identity suffered compared to those around it, remembering how:

> We tended to measure ourselves against New York and Washington and fell short…They had the empire state building. We had the Bromo-seltzer Tower. We were in no way in the same league with anything to do with New York. And suddenly we had this football team that was champions of the world, and we couldn't believe it. We just couldn't believe it. (*The Band* 2010)

Here, sports became the way in which the identity of the city could assert itself, despite the lack of comparative economic or political power. Olesker echoed the statement he made for Barry Levinson's documentary throughout his own book, *The Colts' Baltimore*, claiming that the championship was "a brief moment when Baltimore emerged from its sense of itself as gawky and overlooked" (Olesker 2008, 4). Such statements can, of course, be distorting, as the significance or power of identity that is lent to the fans may not reflect the feelings of the general populace. However, it is important to note that there are such undercurrents which prioritize sporting success as sufficient basis for some

measure of civic pride. As with the Steelers, there are also hints of the rise of sporting in importance due to the ostensible inferiority of the city when evaluated by other measures. The team, it is implied, carries a meaning and a significance that provides identity when other measures of identity are lacking.

There is also a discourse of authenticity that permeates the discussion of the initial Baltimore championship. To Olesker, that victory and the celebration that followed was "the consummation of a municipal love affair that sprang from their hearts, and not the marketing instinct of some NFL public relations manipulators" (Olesker 2008, 3). As with the rhetorics of some of the other teams such as the Steelers, the relationship of the team to the city is characterized as organic and pure, sincere in a way that favorably compares to the presumably economically constructed popularity of other teams who use economics to stand in for what ought to be genuine feeling.

### *The Move Under Irsay*

A series of circumstances (related primarily to a form of tax evasion) placed the Colts in the hands of Robert Irsay. The owner of the Colts, Carroll Rosenbloom, wished to take over the Los Angeles Rams in the wake of the death of Dan Reeves', the Rams former owner. However, to do so through an exchange of money would mean heavy taxes. Instead, he wanted to trade a team for a team, which required the Rams to be initially bought by a third party and then traded to Rosenbloom for the Colts. The third party Rosenbloom picked for the scheme was Robert Irsay. And in an interview with William Gildea years later, Rosenbloom's son would imply a measure of malice to the

deal as well. When Gildea asked "Did your father know about Irsay," he replied "The kind of guy he was? Yeah, oh yeah. I think that was a legacy my father left Baltimore on purpose… at that time in his life my dad was not very happy with Baltimore" (Gildea 1996, 254). The legacy, founded on a deal that had both economics and anger at heart, would end much in the same way, as Irsay's character disgruntled fans and the city of Baltimore refused to cede to his various and mounting demands. Eventually, under the threat of eminent domain, Irsay moved the Colts to Indianapolis on March 12, 1984, a move that unfolded quite literally in the middle of the night, under cover of darkness.

Though cities may experience varying levels of attachment to the sports teams located in them, the basis of the sports franchise system in America is an economic one. There is a system of ownership which allows teams to move that, while not entirely without restriction, is often based on the desires of whoever owns the team, irrespective of any of the economic or emotional repercussions on the city. This reality was clearly articulated by the former owner of the Baltimore Colts Jim Irsay when, at a press conference, he declared that "It's not your ball team. It's not our ball team. It's my family's ball team. I paid for it, and I work for it" (*The Band* 2010). In Olesker's opinion, what this decision achieved:

> … was to help legitimize a posture of bullying in professional sports. He destroyed all myth of the two-way love affair between a community and a team. Give me what I want, or I leave, all Irsay imitators thereafter declared. He cemented the role of blackmail in professional sports… All the years of fan support count for nothing since he kidnapped the Colts. (Olesker 2008, 19)

Much like the remembrance of the team during its glory days, the relationship between the team and the city becomes colored with a type of nostalgia. Even though the Colts themselves helped to usher in the modern era of football, there is ambivalence in the economics of the changed game that grew out of their victory. While at one time they brought football to prominence, according to Olesker it was their owner who drove home the fact that teams were economic entities that could leave, regardless of the city's affection for the team or the history that they shared. When faced with the reality of Irsay's ownership, and the subsequent midnight removal of the Baltimore Colts because of the truth of his statement or ownership, those in the city who were fans of the team experienced a loss which articulated itself in specific ways. In the case of Baltimore, as the documentary *The Band that Wouldn't Die* by Barry Levinson records, this issue of loss partially articulated itself through music, in the form of a marching band which attempted to maintain the team's traditions and sense of identity in the face of the selling and absence of the team.

The idea that the presence of the team was integral to the identity of the city and that the 1958 championship was an epochal moment in the representation of that identity carried through to the loss of the team. Olesker claimed that by selling the Colts, Jim Irsay "froze Blatimore football in time… We nurtured our memories… the affection deepened… And the '58 sudden-death game became the heart of it all" (Olesker 2008, 19). The loss filtered through to the political realm as well, particularly given the legal battles that surrounded the selling of the Colts and the connections between the mayor and the team's owner. Bob Douglas, the press secretary to Schaefer, recalling the team's

departure, declared that for then-mayor Schaefer, “Then and now, I think he considers that probably his biggest failure as the mayor of Baltimore. He's not over it to this day” (*The Band* 2010), suggesting that the loss of the team was in many ways a political failure. Later, when the band would attempt to regain a team, the struggle would become political once more, serving as a reminder that while football serves as a form of entertainment, it also shapes political processes and decisions. It is not merely an emotional matter of pride but a political and economic matter as well.

The visualization of the scene became notorious as well. In his analysis of sports team moves, Charles Euchner discusses the symbolism of Baltimore’s move and its implications. According to Euchner, the “scene at the Owings Mills complex became more vivid in the public mind as time passed, and it was an important influence in the city’s eventual decision to build a new stadium” (Euchner 1994, 113). The scene even has its own memorial of sorts in Baltimore’s Sports Legends Museum at Camden Yards. The Colts’ portion of the museum contains a recreation of the back of a Mayflower moving van, the vehicles that infamously drove up in the middle of the night then drove off, taking the equipment with them [Figure 31: The Mayflower Van Exhibit]. While the prospect of a moved team can deeply affect the city, the imagery provided by the nature of the move reinforced the sense of having been wronged and, according to Euchner’s suggestion, further contributed to the later potency of efforts to bring back a team.

### *The Baltimore Colts Band*

The tagline on the cover of the DVD for *The Band that Wouldn't Die* reads "You can heal all wounds with a fight song," (*The Band* 2010), a brief articulation of the idea that music plays a significant, even fundamental role, in the formation of identity. The back of the box, in its summary of the film, declares that "More than most NFL teams, the Colts were an integral part of the city, and fans struggled to cope with losing the team they loved" and that "For the 12 years that the city was without an NFL team, the band continued to play, acting as musical ambassadors for the city, keeping football alive until the NFL returned" (*The Band* 2010). This summary focuses on the importance of the team to the city and the sense of loss that accompanied it. However, its phrasing also attempts to emphasize the uniqueness of the city and its situation with "more than most," an attempt to differentiate the struggles of a particular city and the way it retained its identity in a particular fashion, through the efforts of the band. Within the documentary itself, the place of the Baltimore Colt's in the identity of the city and the history of the sport of football is also repeatedly suggested. One fan described the team during its winning "…if there was ever a Camelot, that was Camelot. For one brief shining moment, that team was everything in this town" (*The Band* 2010). Levinson's documentary frames the band as responsible for the preservation and maintenance of the tradition when that identity started to collapse, until the time finally came when football returned to the city.

The band, beyond providing a locus of identity for the fans that had been stripped of the team itself, was used as an outward way of manifesting the community's desire and loyalty to the sport itself. According to Michael Olesker:

> We were in mourning for twelve years. And the remarkable thing, the amazing this is, here's this guy John Zieman, the leader of the band, who's gotta be totally crazy, he says "No… if we keep playing, maybe it will signal the NFL: Look at how much Baltimore loves football. Look how much they want a team back. And he kept the team going… who ever heard of such a thing? (*The Band* 2010)

A 1986 Sports Illustrated article reflected the same idea, explain this as "Colts band logic: If we play loud enough and persevere, a team might come along and adopt us" (Murphy 1986, 14). Though the loss of the team was painful, it had happened before. Though the old team could not be regained, a new team was still hoped for, rather than being considered irreplaceable. The sport of football in general was part of the identity of the city beyond the specifics of the team itself. Steve Bisciotti, the current owner of Baltimore Ravens, recalled "how tough it was to view the NFL as a world that you weren't really a part of any more" (*The Band* 2010), suggesting that the NFL was a community as well, a second identity and sense of community which had been stripped away from Baltimore simultaneously, beyond the specific identity of the team. Yet even if the team had been lost, there remained a sense that replacement was possible. However, in order to gain that replacement, an outward performance was necessary as a demonstration of loyalty. The band, therefore, was instrumental not only in a nostalgic

capacity, maintaining a previous tradition and identity, but in a more functional capacity, that sought to repair rather than solely reminisce.

As an alternative, in the absence of being awarded another NFL franchise, the city turned to the Canadian Football League. Levinson's documentary, however, frames this move as an act of desperation, an undertaking done less about the city's passions for the sport and more about bitterness towards the NFL, a group of which, though it was alienating and aggravating them, many in Baltimore still deeply wished to be a part. The CFL was a stopgap measure, but *The Band that Wouldn't Die* suggests that it was not truly embraced. One band member vented "You know what it was like to sit there and watch Canadian Football?... It was awful. It was awful" (*The Band* 2010). And as done throughout the documentary, Levinson frames the issue though music, showing a clip of players shifting uncomfortably as a woman singing "O Canada" blares through the stadium loudspeakers. Unlike the clips showing the band playing or the fight song, there is little reaction from the crowd. There is music, but because the music does not tie into the tradition, it does not connect or elicit the same response as the song weighted with tradition.

As previously mentioned, there are economic and political repercussions that play out in various ways due to the presence of football in a city. In an academic analysis of sports franchise relocation issues (written while the situation in Baltimore was then currently unfolding), Arthur Johnson observed that "although sports franchises can contribute social and economic benefits to a city, they can also be costly…. Whether or not the benefits of hosting a sports franchise merit the consequent public cost is

ultimately a policy decision to be made by local officials" (Johnson 1983, 527). This concept of public decision making directly conflated with the issue of the Colt's status in Baltimore. As Johnson observed at the time, though the city made offerings "no public response from the Colts has been made, and state legislators are publicly skeptical that Irsay will accept the offer'" (Johnson 1983, 526). Irsay did not, instead choosing, as already discussed, to move the team away in the middle of the night, amid accusations of being treated improperly by the city and indications that, if not moved, the city might attempt to seize the team through eminent domain. When the time came for the city to attempt to attract another franchise, key members of the state legislature balked at such a policy decision. Then Senator Brian Frosh declared that "We shouldn't be building palaces for plutocrats… The priorities are wrong. We have many more pressing needs — school construction, jail construction" (*The Band* 2010). The band spokesman John Ziemann recounted that "the one senator stood up on a Friday and said, 'You don't have one civic group to stand by you.' And I heard that and was like "heck they don't" (*The Band* 2010). Bob Douglas described the process by which the band asserted its socio-political power:

> We got the idea that, forget trying to convince them with logic. We got to get to the heart. Got to express what this NFL team can mean for Baltimore. And so how do you do that? You remind people what the old team meant to Baltimore. And how best do you do that? Speeches don't do it. Music. So the idea was to get the band to play that fight song. Because it reaches deep. It still does. Because that fight song symbolized: not just the team but this community… the idea was to remind everybody of that fight song and what it meant and what this stadium means. (*The Band* 2010)

It echoes a declaration of Michael Olesker's that the fight song was "the city's unofficial municipal anthem" (Olesker 2008, 3) suggesting that it was therefore a song uniquely suited to the circumstances of affecting action which impacted both the city and the team. The band members then reminisced about the way in which they gathered and played the fight song on the steps of the legislative building before an evening session in an attempt to saw public and political opinion on the issue of building a new stadium. Band spokesman John Ziemann described the incident:

> And we're on the state house steps handing out flyers, flag line handing out flyers, the band playing the fight song. All of a sudden, the house and senate were late getting started at night 'cause they were all outside listening to us, cheering us on. Governor Schaefer came out and looked, and just tears were coming down his face… I mean, you literally had 100-plus legislators and staff out there singing the Colt fight song with Schaefer there also singing with them and leading cheers. And that was the first time, listening to the band, that we felt that we had connected. (*The Band* 2010)

He went on to say that Governor Schaefer felt that in addition to the funding, it was the band's performance "that pushed it through" (*The Band* 2010), succeeding in their attempt to subvert other political concerns and elicit the desired emotional response.

In this incident, music and geography are functioning in several ways. The first, perhaps most direct way, is the method by which the musical performance itself was used to co-opt the space. The band members in the documentary describe this phenomenon, speaking of how the band members were blocking doors because they were so numerous and loudly making their presence known. There also existed a symbolic layer to that infiltration of space. As Connell and Gibson remark, "sounds in themselves can occupy the site of considerable political tensions… and sometimes are seen as reflecting the

general state of popular culture in society" (Connell and Gibson 2003, 220). While the amount of tension may be debatable, the literal and figurative presence of the band figures strongly and the documentary implies that it conveyed a communal desire. Not only were the members being highly present in a very public area, but the space they were taking over was symbolic in its own way. To perform not simply in public, but on the steps of a political building, was an overtly political gesture and a clear (and arguably successful) attempt at using music to convey their political message. Finally, the recounting of the event demonstrates the felt connection that the band's members made between the band, its music, and the city (and state's) sense of geographic identity. This is overt in the declaration that it symbolized "not just the team but this community" (*The Band* 2010). However, it is also present in the description of the reactions of the legislature. By describing the members as coming out of the building and emotionally responding (cheering, crying, singing along) to the band's audible persuasion, it is implied that there was an efficacy to the performance, suggesting that the influence of the music over leaders was representative of the influence of the music over the population as a whole.

As a previous chapter has discussed, there are strong religious overtones to many sporting events and ceremonies as well as the formation of sports identity. Michael Olesker's book *The Colts' Baltimore* opens up at a religious ceremony, the funeral of

Johnny Unitas.[6] The opening lines demonstrate the interplay between religion, sport, and civic identity:

> They're the only two men in America who would haul a football banner to a funeral service… On the day John Unitas goes to his grave, the two of them, [Eugene "Reds" Hubbe] and [John] Gattus, march up to the front steps of the stately Cathedral of Mary Our Queen as though they might conduct orchestrated cheers for the dearly departed. And everybody around Baltimore agrees this is a beautiful thing to behold. (Olesker 2008, 1)

Olesker would also remark, regarding the coincidence of Unitas' death date, that "now it's Unitas, struck down on September 11, 2002, the first anniversary of the attacks" (Olesker 2008, 3), making a quietly implicit connection between a national day or tragedy and the loss of a figure who loomed large in Baltimore's civic imagination. The day of his funeral is implied to be a day of mourning for the city. Levinson's documentary, much like the previously cited Steelers documentaries, invokes these quasi-religious sentiments as well, tying them into the musical expression that dominates the documentary. When speaking of the obsession that the city of Baltimore had with the Colts, Michael Gibbons, the executive direction of the Babe Ruth & Sports Legend Museum, claimed that ""It was almost religion. Every Sunday was like going to church for a lot of Baltimoreans. And I think that we really did come to worship at the altar of Johnny Unitas… the further we went along with that, the more fanatic we became" (*The Band* 2010). The interviewees also described the loss of one particular fan, "Loudy" Loudenslager, a man who would greet the team upon returning to the Baltimore Airport

[6] Incidentally, *The Socio-Economic Underpinnings of Steelers Nation* also opens with a wake/funeral, though not of a player but of a fan buried in his Steelers' gear, watching a reel of highlights (*Socio-Economic* 2010).

with a recording of the fight son and who was well known enough to have team members (including Unitas) as his pallbearers. Fellow fans described him being buried in a Colt's uniform and reminiscing how "as Loudy was laid to rest, it was to the slow strains of the Colt fight song played by the band" (*The Band* 2010). Another fan "remembered when he went to elementary school, and every day for the opening exercises, they had the same rituals: the Pledge of Allegiance, the Our Father, and the Baltimore Colts marching song" (*The Band* 2010), putting loyalty to the team in the same context as patriotism and religiosity.

When a team finally did return to Baltimore, there was an implied sense of historical continuity for which the band is responsible. The aforementioned SI article began by stating that the band was "Penelope, faithfully awaiting Odysseus' return" (Murphy1986, 12) and the movie reinforces that sentiment, of a group endlessly and faithfully waiting, demonstrating their loyalty over and over. And when Art Modell brought a team to Baltimore, the team was permitted to keep their old uniforms for two years before transitioning over to the name and colors of the new team, the Baltimore Ravens, a phenomenon David Modell described as a "two year bow" that "they deserved" (*The Band* 2010). Relatively absent from the discussion, however, was the fact that Baltimore's new team had come at the expense of Cleveland's – the new Ravens were the old Browns. The reaction to this in the documentary was summed up as "conflicted emotions" in a matter of a few moments, before moving on to complimenting Modell's incorporation of tradition into the new team. A Washington Post article about the documentary's screening at the Raven's stadium remarked that "Along with the band

members themselves, Modell and his son David emerge as the film's heroes, especially in the way they merged the Colts and Ravens cultures, paying homage to the past and then, with exquisite sensitivity and grace, allowing a heartsick city to heal" (Hornaday 2009), a depiction which obfuscates the fact that, in Cleveland, Modell was as much of a villain as Irsay had been in Baltimore. Yet, as Ted Patternson noted in *Football in Baltimore*, although "Baltimore fans had mixed feelings about the move… because the HFL had turned its back on Baltimore's expansion efforts, they were glad to get a team no matter what the circumstances" (Patterson 2000, 239). Even in their sympathy, their own city and its fortunes came before Cleveland's. The continuity the Modells brought to the franchise was the focus in the film itself, and continuity through music remains the documentary's closing theme. The final spoken lines claim that "The band has been the constant in our football lives… thank God for the band" (*The Band* 2010).

# Chapter 4: Sport, Spectatorship and Museum Space

## "Whatever It Takes" and Pittsburgh's Sporting Identity

The architecture of a museum exhibit inevitably reveals a multitude of understandings about spatiality. As exhibits arrange knowledge in space, moving through them allows for a particular kind of understanding, influenced by the structure of the exhibit itself (Till 2001). The space of a museum exhibit elicits other, "real world" spaces as well as mediated and fantasy spaces. Museum space also evokes a particular sense of time or temporality, constructing particular events as important and delineating historical phases. Sports museums add an additional layer of complication as, though they may present themselves as museums, there are tensions with more traditional understandings of a museums role. As Wray Vamplew observes, "sports museums cater to the nostalgia market" (Vamplew 1998, 270), an impulse that he argues, produces factual errors and omits pertinent information in the favor of fantasy. Analysis is crucial, therefore, to examine what the myths or omissions of an exhibit may be. Sporting or otherwise, museums produce conceptions of history and culture which carry authority. They construct conceptions of reality, reinforcing particular discourses as they do. To better understand the ways in which they do this, museums must be approached both rhetorically and spatially. The 'text' of the exhibit is expressed in multiple ways, including the written paraphernalia (placards, promotional materials) as well as the material culture the museum creates, preserve, and arranges. Yet each contributes to the

overall message of the museum, ultimately shaping the cultural understandings of those who visit there.

In the case of the Pittsburgh Steelers exhibit, *Whatever it Takes*, at the Carnegie Mellon Miller Gallery, the structure of the exhibit revealed particularly spatially structured ways of understanding the sport and its connections to the city and, the exhibit itself would argue, to the world. Smaller exhibits within the larger exhibit broke space down in a number of ways, ranging from the personal to the local to the global. Four key exhibits will be examined in light of this doubly spatial turn: an exhibit which used visitor participation to recreate a significant moment on the field, a room from a person's home that was removed and reconstructed within the exhibit, a map of Steelers bars with an accompanying 'Skype bar' connected to one of those bars, and finally a series of tattoos and t-shirts, connecting the city to the body. Each of these exhibits adds to the themes and understanding discussed in earlier chapters, rearticulating many previously explored concepts regarding the city, the team, and the fandom's identity through the form of the museum.

### *The Immaculate Reception*

In the hierarchy of the sports experience, perhaps the closest people to the game would be the players and those on the field themselves, structuring the game with their play or their presentation of it. Next closest would be the fans in the stand, experiencing the game live and in a setting surrounded by hundreds of other fans. After that might be a

setting which, while not the stadium, would seek to simulate some of the stadium conditions – such as a bar, where one might be lacking the physical location, but present with many others fans interested in sharing the same experience, just as the spectators in the stands would be. *Whatever it Takes* emphasizes these hierarchies by recreating them in several of its exhibits. It also participates in certain ways by permitting fans to position themselves in spaces – in this particular instance, on a recreated field of play, at a significant moment in time.

To understand the import of the exhibit, it is therefore important to understand that moment. The Immaculate Reception is an appellation for a highly disputed yet in many ways significant football play. The Pittsburgh Steelers were playing against the Oakland Raiders in the 1972 AFC division playoff game. The Steelers were behind with time running out and a pass play was called. The Steelers quarterback, Terry Bradshaw, threw the ball towards the halfback John Fuqua. Fuqua was immediately hit by Raider's safety Jack Tatum and the ball tumbled backwards. Though it was uncertain whom the ball had hit during the play, Franco Harris, a fullback who was slated to block on the play, scooped the ball up and ran it in for a touchdown. The dispute over the play rose from the uncertainty, in an era before instant replay, of whom the ball had touched – for a player other than Fuqua to be eligible to receive the pass, according to the rules at the time, the ball had to touch Tatum, the defensive player. Despite the uncertainty over the legality of Harris' play, on the field a touchdown was signaled by one of the referees; then, after a delay, the Steelers were awarded six points for the touchdown and went on to win the game.

Though the Steelers would go on to lose the subsequent AFC Championship game, the play became famous and infamous. NFL Films named it the most controversial play in NFL history ("NFL Videos" 2010) and numerous interviews of those involved, years after the fact, have touched upon the play. In recent years, even professors of physics have remarked on the controversy, examining the subsequent trajectory of the ball to gain some idea of whom it would have had to hit in order to fly where it did (Gay 2005). Despite its controversy, however, the play is epochal to Steelers fans not simply as a controversial call that infamously went their way, but also as the moment that the team's shift from being perennial losers to becoming consistent playoff contenders and frequent Super Bowl winners. Regardless of the gradual changes which had to take place for the team to evolve and gain a different tenor, this play is often positioned as the "biggest turning point for the Steelers" (Walker 2011), the moment that they went from being perennial losers to persistent contenders.

The significance of it is such that a statue of Harris scooping up the ball stands next to George Washington in the Pittsburgh International Airport, and image that greets visitors as they leave to retrieve their luggage [Figure 13: Franco Harris and George Washington]. Set up by the Western Pennsylvania sports museums, there is a placard between the two statues that declares visitors can "relive a few classic battles," with promotional materials for the museum declaring the same [Figure 16: Relive a Few Classic Battles]. It echoes the idea that Franco's catch was the beginning of the Steelers success with a placard that claims the ""pivotal play set in motion forces that would lead to four Super Bowl wins in the 1970s alone" [Figure 15: Franco Harris Placard]. The

juxtaposition of the statues and the museum pamphlet also create a historical trajectory stretching from Washington to the Immaculate Reception: "From the pre-Revolutionary drama of the French & Indian War to the legendary match-ups of the Super Steelers" a visitor to the museum can "discover Pittsburgh's fascinating history" ("Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum"). This display and the museum's attendant promotional material position the play as a historical moment, not simply for the team but for the city itself. Like much material surrounding the Steelers and the city, there is a playful aspect to the juxtaposition. However, the invited comparison speaks to the perceived significance of the play, constructing significance by attaching it to a more traditionally meaningful historical moment, positioning it as the terminus of the historical trajectory that began with the Revolution.


Figure 13: Franco Harris and George Washington

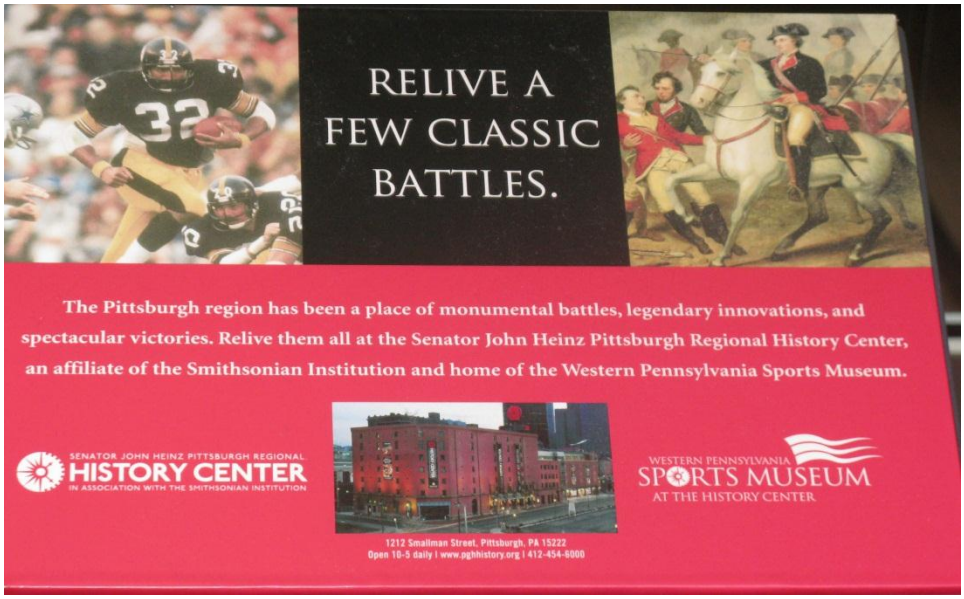


Figure 14: "Classic Battles" Airport Placard

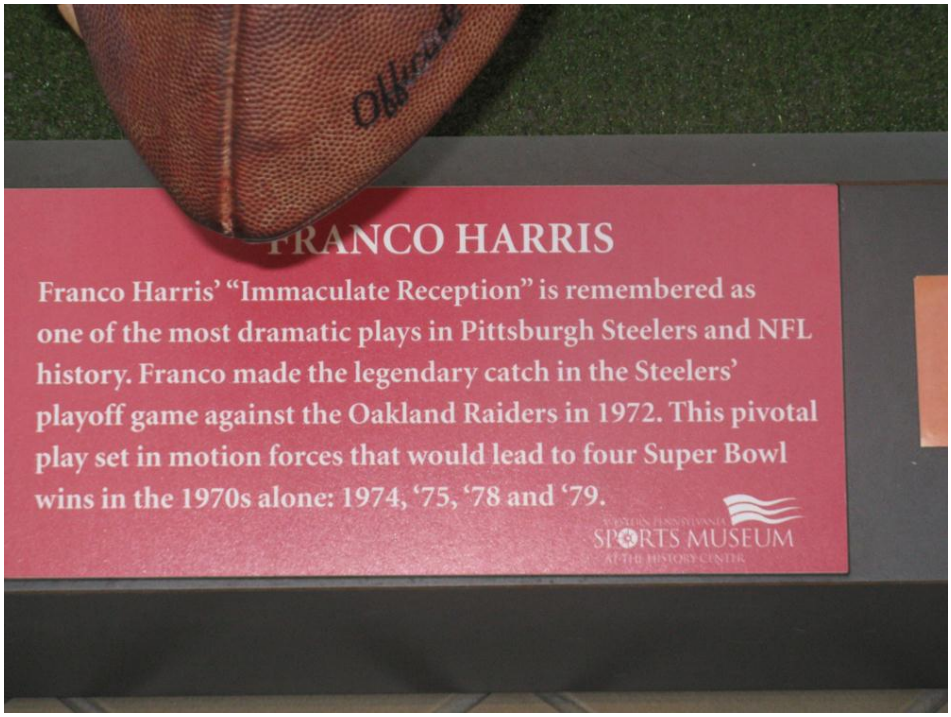


Figure 15: Franco Harris Placard

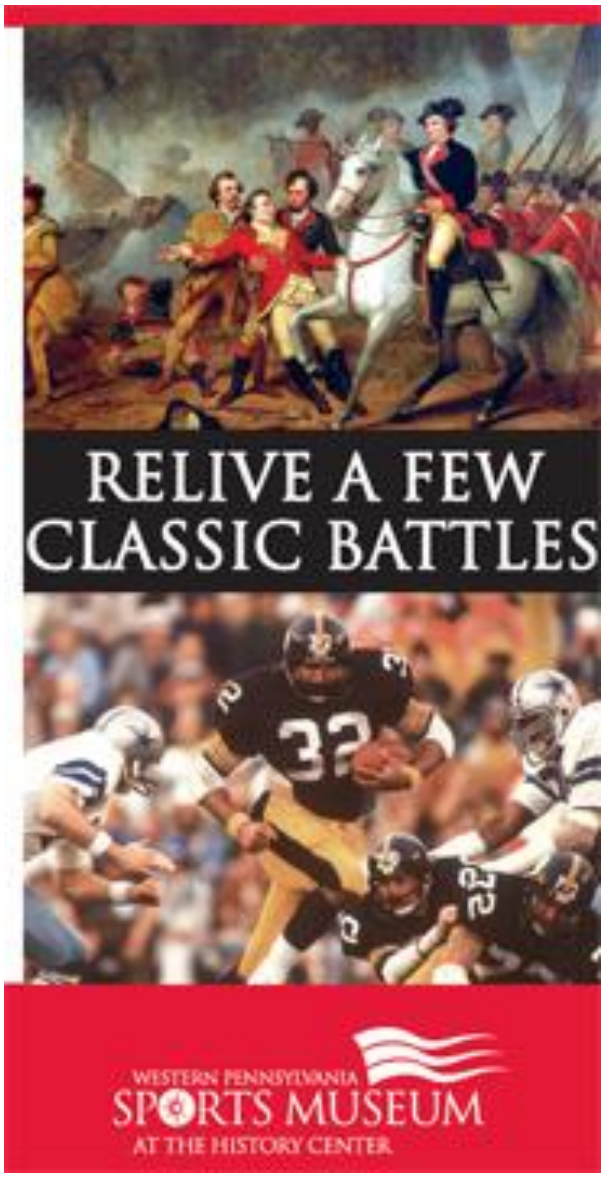


Figure 16: Relive a Few Classic Battles Pamphlet

Central to this history is the play itself, and crucial to the play itself is the space and time in which it happened. The exhibit about Franco Harris' Immaculate Reception is attempts to capture and recreate both the spatial experience of being on the field and the temporal dimension of being on the field at that moment, in the place of Franco Harris.

By marking that particular moment, visitors interact not only with a representation of space but with a representation of history. In doing so, the exhibit reinforces the importance of the moment. It also positions history as participatory – though the play itself might have been in the past, by participating in its recreation fans play a part in maintaining the history and the significance of the play. As already established, nostalgia can be a powerfully motivating force within sports and identity. Here the role of space when coupled with time reinforces this relationship. The nostalgia for time and place are not merely rhetorically but physically articulated with each fan who participated in the exhibit.

The space of the exhibit itself could not fully embody the space of the stadium or the experience of that moment. Nevertheless, it included a number of elements that played at authenticity with its recreation [Figure 17: Replaying the "Immaculate Reception"]. The exhibit was structured with a camera at one end, props representing the field and cutouts of other players, and a green screen. To be a part of the exhibit, the volunteer present would switch on the camera and direct the participant to stand on an X drawn on the field then follow the dashed line representing Harris' path down it. He would then lob the ball to the participant, time to be catchable at the dot in the middle of the line representing where Harris caught the ball. The participant would complete the run, having simulated the play. The camera would capture the event and then digitally edit the film so that it appeared as if it was part of the originally captured moment.


Figure 17: Replaying the "Immaculate Reception"

Though a somewhat campy recreation, this facet of the overall museum exhibit suggests lingering nostalgia for that incident, a desire to be 'there' and part of a moment. That there even *is* a moment, that the history of the Steeler's improvement could be pinpointed to a specific play, suggests the desire for people to latch on and give meaning, to define a change with some occurrence which can be marked and celebrated. Even if the moment was passed, it would not stop people from wishing to discuss it and, finally, to recreate it with a fan in the moment of the action. Standing in for the place of Harris gives the feeling of being even as it coexists with the realization that it is not being, an

understanding that a concrete room is not Three Rivers Stadium and that cardboard figurines are not the players. The distinction between the false and the real surfaces again here: though clearly a fabrication, with cardboard cutouts and a field inside a concrete building, that does not imply a diminished sincerity for participating in the pantomime, a belief that participating in the exhibit gives one some share in the temporal moment, some authentic sense of community participation.

The final aspect of the play's recreation shifts once again into a reminder of the centrality of the community within the fandom. Behind the camera, a screen contained clips of those who had come before in the exhibit and allowed themselves to be recorded, letting fans who submitted themselves to recording to see others who had done the same. By making this reproduction visible, the exhibit encourages a sense of communal embodiment, implying that it is a broad spectrum of fans who would want to be a part of that moment. In a way, as multiple people play that moment over and over again, it may even suggest in a more tangible way the oft-cited idea that fans have some tangible impact – that it was not simply Harris, a football player performing on a field – who made the play, but rather a totality of people supporting Harris who stood behind him and finally, in a recreated moment, stood in for him.

***The Man Cave***

Figure 18: The Man-Cave

The centerpiece of the entire exhibit was likewise a deeply spatial one. Upon going to the center floor, the main floor of the exhibit, the first thing a visitor would see taking up most of the center of the room was a 'man-cave' [Figure 18: The Man-Cave] For those unfamiliar with the appellation, a man-cave is a term for a room, potentially in the basement, which frequently contains a television for watching sports as well as any collected memorabilia attached to the sport or sports team that the occupant supports. In this case, it was the room of fan Denny DeLuca which was moved almost in its entirety (with the exception, as noted in the materials in the gallery, of a bed and his television) and then recreated in the exhibit.

Here, a number of important connections were being made. As with the Immaculate Recreation exhibit, there is a sense of hierarchy which places the field at the center of spatial experience. In narrative which appeared on the TV in the man-cave, a filmed DeLuca explained the significance of two of the chairs which appeared in the cave [Figure 19: Chairs from the demolished Three Rivers Stadium]. The chairs, which had Terrible Towels draped over them, were remnants from the demolished Three Rivers Stadium, actual chairs taken out before the stadium was torn down and sold to fans who desired a piece of the place. The chairs give a sense of place within place, objects meant to connect the new place to the old one and reinforcing the same sense of nostalgia for the spaces of the past that the Immaculate Reception exhibit evoked as well.


Figure 19: Chairs from the demolished Three Rivers Stadium

A second, highly significant aspect of the place is the way in which is reinforces the exhibits ideas and discussions of economy. One of the main themes of the exhibit is its foregrounding and even celebration of the alternative methods of expression chosen by fans, using their own methods and creative processes to create new items of fandom. The idea in the exhibit is to reject what might be considered a more stereotypical view of fans as passive consumers of a highly marketed packages sporting product. Instead, the alternative view which the exhibit and its promotional materials sought to encourage was one of an interactive fanbase which draw upon both licensed, sold expressions as well as their own inherent creativity to create a blend of expression. This line of argument ties in with the constructed identity of the fan-base itself. Long represented as a poorer, blue-collar fan base, the idea that fans would seek to make their own, homemade versions of memorabilia rather than passively purchasing frames fan behavior in the context of a creativity bound up in necessity.

The homemade, constructed nature of DeLuca's space was very readily apparent. The walls of the room were paper with clippings of Steelers victories and celebrations. On the ceiling of the room was a chandelier made from promotion Steelers fast food drink cups with lights pushed through the cardboard bottoms, replacing that standard lampshades [Figure 20: A homemade lamp constructed from paper cups]. A second light fixture, a lamp on a table, was a regular lamp with more clippings of players adhered to it [Figure 21: A second lamp, with pictures pasted onto the shade].

Figure 20: A homemade lamp constructed from paper cups

Figure 21: A second lamp, with pictures pasted onto the shade

There was also a wall of toy players that had been formed by taking miniatures from other teams and repainting them to look like Steelers. Like the lamp, tables and other surfaces were covered with images and clippings, promotional items repurposed and

reused in unconventional ways. Though there were many licensed products in the cave as well, the suggestion of it was as a space which supported the argument of the gallery – that to be a fan wasn't to simply purchase jerseys and Towels, but to carry the impulse forward into something more personal, intimate, and handmade. This impulse towards the handmade can be compared with an NFL commercial which also featured a lamp. The commercial began with a panning shot of a 'man-cave' likewise stuffed with Steelers memorabilia. It then focused in on a normal lamp and the words "what's with the lamp" appeared on screen [Figure 22: What's With the Lamp].


Figure 22: What's With the Lamp

The commercial then immediately cut to an image of a lamp that could be purchased on the NFL's website [Figure 23: NFL.com Lamp].

Figure 23: NFL.com Lamp

The commercial would suggest that the appropriate course of action for a fan to take would be to buy the lamp from their website. However, the exhibit self-consciously refutes the idea that such a course of action is necessary. Instead, it revels in and encourages the handmade nature of such items as the lamps.

In addition to the nature of the space as denoted by the types of memorabilia which DeLuca included, the construction of the space itself lent to a particular spatial experience. The room within a room took visitors from a wide open space and into one

much smaller and more closed-in. The sheer volume of memorabilia inside the cave was such as to give a sense of claustrophobia. Items were everywhere, often arranged in a seemingly haphazard fashion, covering every open inch of space. The walls and ceiling were papered with clippings, the furniture had fabric thrown over it to make even unlicensed items appear black and gold, there were numerous shelves lining the room all weighed down with various types of memorabilia, and there were items shoved into every corner and sitting on top of every surface.

Part of the effect of this construction was to overwhelm. The sheer overload suggests a type of excess inherent in being a fandom, a takeover of the senses willingly indulged in and encouraged. There was also a sense of intimacy which accompanied the exhibit. Unlike many museum exhibits, including other aspects of Whatever It Takes, the man-cave was not arranged or structured to be a clean presentation. Instead, it gave the effect of walking into somebody's house before they had had the opportunity to tidy up and put things away. That the gallery used somebody's real room, rather than trying to construct some sort of general concept of what a fan's room might look like, adds a further layer of authenticity. The narrative by DeLuca, peppered with anecdotes and explanations for the memorabilia in the room which played for the visitor while inside of the room, also works to establish the much discussed sense of fan community. By framing DeLuca as the presenter, rather than simply the gallery, seeing the man-cave becomes a fan to fan experience, something shared by a fan with other fans, predicated on the understanding that it was a shared experience. The exhibit shifts from the sense of being 'outside looking in' to a sense of shared experience. Much like the Immaculate

Recreation sought to put fans on the field at a significant moment, placing fans within a part of another fan's home suggests a universality of meaning and fan experience and a desire to share space in a deep and personal sense.

This behavior of sharing aspects of the home is not limited within the museum, however. The short DVD being sold in the museum gift shop featured one such room belonging to a man in Arkansas (*Socio-Economic* 2010) [Figure 24: Adam Atkinson presenting a man-cave].


Figure 24: Adam Atkinson presenting a man-cave

Other publications have similarly highlighted the rooms, or even homes, that people have created to demonstrate their affiliation with the team. The June 2011 issue of *Pittsburgh Magazine*, a publication that focuses on the arts and cultural events happening in

Pittsburgh, including sports in such categories, featured a home in Liberty Hill Texas [Figure 25: Texas Steelers Home]. The article was entitled “This Proves Steelers Fancaves are Everywhere, Literally” and like many of the museum exhibits and other articles, suggested that geography was something for the fandom to transcend (Montanez 2011).


Figure 25: Texas Steelers Home (Montanez 2011)

***Connections beyond the City***

Much of the exhibit focused on the internality of the experience, the ways in which people seek to get closer and closer to the sense of being on the field. However, there were also connections drawn to the broader fan base to which the museum gave attention. If the field in one sense dominates all of the spaces of fandom, that does not make those spaces irrelevant. On the contrary, the farther away and less likely they are to be read as a sign of the fandom's strength and its ability to successful extend itself and geographically penetrate into other areas. Covering the back of one wall was a map, designed to show the concentration of Steelers' bars across America. At the other end of the exhibit was a bar with several stools and an internet connection, via Skype, to a bar in Italy where international Steelers fans would also congregate to watch games [Figure 26: The Skype Bar].

Figure 26: The Skype Bar

The map establishes an imaginary. To view the map, to read the list of bars along the side, and to see the symbols across represented space, produces a read understanding of the scope of the fandom. The map signifies the Andersonian "imagined community," only in this case consisting of people whom viewers of the map cannot see, nor even guarantee are accurately represented by the map, yet nevertheless assume to exist, with the assumption that something connects them and is shared between them. The Skype bar then takes this conceived connection up a level of the experiential hierarchy by producing a material connection to fans in other places. Though it takes a coincidence of circumstances (namely, the presence of fans at each place at the same time), direct

communication becomes possible through the exhibit. The community is no longer simply an imaginative one, but instead transforms into an interactive one in which exchanges centered on the team can be made. Because of the differences in time zones, it also seems likely that the moment of most interaction would be the moment of the game, an event with a shared significance which would cause a coincidence of presence for fans on both ends of the spectrum. This shifts the meaning of the museum from a place that refers to the spaces of fandom to a space that actually participates in creating a fan space. At the very end of the exhibit, the museum even hosted a Super Bowl party of its own, again demonstrating its shifting relationship between presenting spaces and becoming one of those spaces itself.

Once more, Atkinson's presentation offers up an interpretation of the import of Steelers bars and clubs, in the process drawing certain distinctions between them and other similar groupings. A crucial distinction that Atkinson draws is the difference between communities facilitated solely through technology and those which form in the physical world, with the suggestion – as many of the museum exhibits suggest – that physically being in a place is a crucial element to the authenticity of the experience. In this particular case, the element of being there (with the exception of the 'pilgrimages' he references) is largely absent. However, the element of being with and engaging with the community face to face is what, for Atkinson and likely others, distinguishes the Steelers club and bar phenomenon from other types of interaction and gives it a greater place in the hierarchy of fan experience. At the end of the video, Atkinson shows more Steeler's

gatherings and warns members that they have "no reason" not to watch games; there is, he implies, always a community to facilitate that spectatorship (*Socio-Economic* 2010).

The phenomenon of the Steelers bar can be important in other ways as well. Already discussed at some length is the idea of nostalgia, that cheering for a team provides a vicarious way of expressing civic alignment. Kraszewski, in his analysis of Steelers bars in Texas, suggests that there are particular sociological motives for the bar phenomenon in particular, and that it functions in certain ways. Specifically, he suggests that "football bars offer people the ability to reconnect with and manage the irreconcilable tensions of home" (Kraszewski 2008, 142). That the relationship with a person or group towards the idea of "home" might be complicated does not necessarily diminish the desire to return to it, or to find others driven by similarly nostalgic impulses. It is also important to recognize as well that even the places located at the "home" offers ways to manage tensions. Within the environment of the stadium, for example, the focus on the game and the fan experience may diminish other types of identities (political, economic, etc.) which might otherwise fragment the group. The fan experience as a whole becomes a way to manage fractured identities, not merely a place that is at a distance from the geographic home and therefore able to manage difference through that distance. Nevertheless, distance can still be an important aspect in this network of identity creation, as it can spur nostalgia and community efforts to connect with others.

These efforts to connect across distance become significant to the "home" space, just as the home is central to the nostalgic impulse driving these connections. People who go to such bars often do so not only to support the team, but also to recall the city from

which they are distanced. However, within the exhibit, people who are still in the city can see the spread of those bars, suggesting a relationship that runs in more than one direction. The presence of bars and meeting places outside of the city again suggests an importance of geographic spread. Just as the Towel was shown not only in the stadium but also elsewhere, the gathering of fans in places beyond the stadium offers the fan community a sense of itself that the stadium, central though it may be, cannot provide. The city and the stadium are important; but the sense that the community is geographically broad also contributes to the fandom's identity, a sense of strength through numbers and geographic extent.

***The Body as Place***

Up to this point, much of the focus has been on the spatial recreations of the exhibit – making a spatial and temporal recreation of the Immaculate Reception, recreating intimate space in the form of the man-cave, and recreating a sense of global connection with the fan map and the Skype bar. However, the celebration of fandom also suggests that the body itself can be a performative space onto which identity can be written. Two significant parts of the exhibit, a wall of unlicensed fan t-shirts and two walls of photographs of fan tattoos, imply that not only can space be shaped around fans to signify their identities, but that the identity of spaces can be written onto fans and carried with them.

The t-shirt exhibit reinforces several prior concerns of the exhibit. Like the man-cave, it emphasizes the homemade, unlicensed nature of the efforts and the ways in which

fans, in the desire for expression, produce their own forms of identity. Many of these play off of understood tropes, such as the shirt of Mike Tomlin done in the style of the famous Obama "Yes, We Can" poster and another of Tomlin appearing in the auspices of a Christian saint. The meanings conveyed by the shirts playfully connect the meanings generated by the teams to larger understood meanings (like the political and the religious) so that even those unfamiliar with the team and its coaches or players would have some suggestion of the meanings desired to be conveyed by the shirts. Certain words on the shirts, such as 'yinz,' have community connections. Barbara Johnstone argues that the "production and circulation of Pittsburghese shirts is one of the many ways in which many Pittsburghers, ex-Pittsburghers, and visitors come to share ideas about what Pittsburgh speech consists of and what it means" (Johnstone 2009, 172). Such shirts further strengthen a sense of civic affiliation, marking the wearer as having some investment in Pittsburgh via display of speech and team affiliation. The shirt exhibit, like the Immaculate Recreation, was also suggestive of community identity, since in the center of the exhibit there was a screen, surrounded by the shirts, which displayed photographs of people wearing a variety of shirts. This again shifts the shirts into a certain register of authenticity, by which they become not only artifacts in the museum but authentic representations of what people might wear and embrace.

The tattoos also draw upon many aforementioned threads of ideas regarding fan identity. Like the man-cave exhibit, there is a measure of intimacy inherent in the sharing of some of the tattoos. While many would be well visible in public, others were displayed on places such as the back, something that would be covered unless the shirt was

removed and would not necessarily be publicly visible unless deliberately shared. The connections to the team were readily apparent as well traditional tattoo symbols, such as eagles or flames. However, several of the tattoos also included representations of the city itself, including one particularly detailed tattoo which was included on the promotional materials for the exhibit and made available for purchase as a temporary tattoo in the museum gift shop [Figure 27: A tattoo for sale in the museum gift shop]. The incorporation of city and team, tattooed onto the body, suggests the intersection of multiple forms of identity all tied into one another and foregrounded with the purpose of communicating and establishing with other fans an understandable, translatable sense of community.


Figure 27: A tattoo for sale in the museum gift shop

By wearing the representation of the team on the body, the body becomes a conveyor of geography, a representation of the place that the wearer feels attachment to and wishes to signify that attachment. In some ways, such representations may be commercialized or even trivialized, as shirts which represent locations may be bought from countless tourist traps and souvenir shops. However, the presence of the exhibit makes the argument for something more in this instance. The joking, slightly subversive nature of the shirts and the audience for whom they seem intended – fellow fans and citizens (in location or spirit) rather than passers-by, is suggestive of an authenticity of identity that goes beyond the commercial. The tattoos are perhaps even more tied in with identity, by virtue of their relatively permanent nature. The skin itself become the landscape and the identity as those who get the tattoos may, in some instances, figuratively bear the city on their back.

**Museum Space and the Loss of the Colts**

As with the Steelers, the articulation of loss was also accomplished in part through the institution of a museum exhibit. This exhibit, unlike "Whatever It Takes," is a permanent part of the Baltimore Sports Museum at Camden Yards. In it, there are a number of sections displaying various aspects of the Colts/Ravens history, several of them already previously discussed.

The museum space itself is coded as being for people who were already fans of the team. Perhaps the clearest example of this is the stairwell which one must go down in

order to enter in to the football portion of the exhibit. All along the stairwell, there are a variety of numbers painted that have no readily apparent meaning [Figure 28: The stairwell leading into the football portion of the museum]. The only context they are given is the spatial arrangement of the museum, presenting the numbers on the way down to the football exhibit.


Figure 28: The stairwell leading into the football portion of the museum

However unclear the numbers might initially be, when one finally reaches the entrance to the exhibit there is at last an explanatory plaque on the wall, giving the meaning of each numeral [Figure 29: Key to the Numbers].

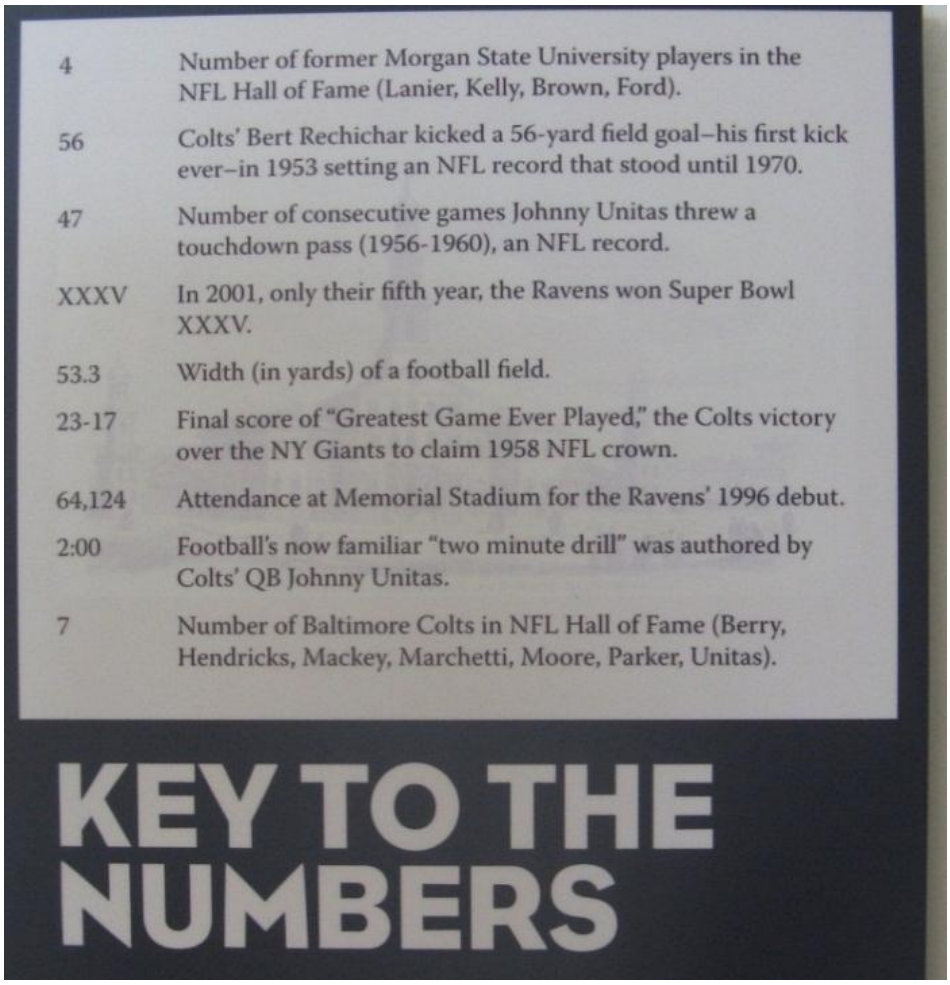


Figure 29: Key to the Numbers

The implication of providing this information only at the end is that for those who know, there is no guide needed at the beginning. The numbers which are significant can be decoded with the proper knowledge – knowledge which would only belong to somebody who is familiar with the team, particularly if they were cognizant of what all the numbers meant. The roman numerals might have hinted at the Super Bowl significance, for instance, since the Super Bowl is a largely watched event and the numerals would be a hint to people familiar with football, since roman numerals are used

to number each one. The 23-17 number might be recognized as a score, although again, those lacking team specific knowledge might not recognize the game to which the score refers. However, some numbers, like 56 for a 56 yard kick, or the 64,124 attendance number, are much more obscure, trivia that only a fan would likely know or be interested in finding out. Certain numbers may be confusing as well – the number 7, for example, might be assumed to signify the number of points one gets in football for a touchdown and the kick after. However, when one looks at the sign, it's revealed to have a much less universal, much more team specific meaning – the number of Baltimore Colts in the NFL Hall of Fame, including Unitas.

There is also a section on the band itself, which incorporates several components of spectatorship and community. The exhibit emphasizes the role of the band within the community, describing many of the activities that the Band did in the absence of the team and what the Band continued to do in terms of community outreached. Organized as a timeline and as an evolution of the Band's outfit, the museum exhibit gives a strong sense of temporality, and emphasizes in material form the continuity of the Band, a concept expressed rhetorically in Levinson's documentary. The section on the Band, like the Steeler's exhibit, also offers an opportunity for interactivity. On the floor of the Band's exhibit, there are a set of footprints which each light up in turn [Figure 30: Marching Like the Band]. Billing itself as an opportunity to "march like the band," one can ostensibly place their feet on the first set of footprints and the roll-step to the end, echoing what the Band would do during a halftime show.

Figure 30: Marching Like the Band

Perhaps the most important part of the museum, however, is the exhibit dedicated to the loss of the Colts. Designed to look like the back of the Mayflower moving van which took the Colts out of Baltimore, it features packing boxes and headlines from the newspaper announcing what had happened the next day [Figure 31: The Mayflower Van Exhibit]. A visit to the exhibit itself demonstrated the emotion it still could stir – while there, a family was visiting and the mother explained in loud, aggravated words, occasionally interspersed with vulgarities to her children about how terrible the move had been and what manner of man Robert Irsay was. When one of the adults with her observed that Irsay "was just trying to make money" the same as any businessperson, the

mother adamantly insisted that his actions were "wrong." This suggests that for some, the feelings about the team's departure have not diminished, and that the exhibit's design may deliberately provoke such recollection and resentment.


Figure 31: The Mayflower Van Exhibit

A lingering geographic irony of the exhibit was that only a few yards away, there was a bronze plaque on the wall to Art Modell, in appreciation for him bringing a team back to Baltimore – and in the process, taking one away from Cleveland, where reactions to his actions were similar to those of the Colts fans' towards Irsay.

## Conclusion

In each museum exhibit, the ideas and theme expressed were largely consistent with other media constructions of the fandom. However, the spatial dimension implicit in the creation of such exhibits adds an extra dimension to this understanding. This spatial imaginary offers unique opportunities for the indulgence of nostalgia and can give avenues for participation in which fans may participate, giving them a role as producers as well as consumers of that nostalgia. The spatial dimension of the museum also gives an opportunity for the production of physical, rather than visual or rhetorical, understandings of concepts central to fandom identity. It is one matter to speak of Steelers bars all over the world, but another to be able to interact with fans of the team in Italy against the backdrop of a massive map showing those bars. The memory of the Colt's move out of Baltimore may be known, but it gains a more visceral dimension when presented as the back of a moving truck. The opportunities that the spatial gives for interaction are important as they reinforce through participation. This spatial visualization, with or without a particularly strong element of participation, argues for culture and cultural understandings in a material way that can be seen and shared. Though it is as much a construction as other types of expression, there is an authenticity lent to the museum brought about in part by this material representation, blurring the lines between the real and the fabricated.

Yet despite this intensified spatial dimension, the goals of the museum exhibits were largely the same as many other productions of the fandom. The museums do little to disrupt such constructions and instead reinforce well-established notions about the team

and the city. However, part of their import is the legitimacy that comes with the cultural understanding of the concept of a museum, as a place of authority where the version of history or meaning expressed carries weight beyond other forms of expression. Through the museum exhibits may be rearticulating themes that appear elsewhere, the appearance of such themes in the museum alone grants these ideas a type of legitimacy. The museum is perhaps one of the most telling ways to see, in Bormann's terms, what fantasy themes have chained up, particularly on the local level. Meant for local consumption and to express the local to those visiting, exhibits like the ones discussed are an embodiment of prominent discourses regarding the area's self-conception. Using space, they tie together multitudinous threads of culture and identity, synthesizing them into a coherent, explorable vision – a city represented within a room.

# Conclusion

That sport revolves around place and deeply involves itself with topophilic understandings of the places that particular sports and teams are attached to is undeniable. However, the nature of those bonds and the ways in which they are formed and maintained are crucial to a more sophisticated understanding of the ways in which sports intersects with geography. The passion and the emotion attached to sporting ideas of place echoes other types of powerful attachments – nostalgia for places distanced through time and space, creating ritual out of the quotidian, investing objects with symbolism, negotiation with tensions among the group to maintain a sense of cohesion, seeking interaction with other member of the group, and so forth.

## *Symbol*

One of the most complex and enduring ways in which a sports community is formed and maintained is the use of the symbol. Sporting symbols form complex networks which fans engage with and use in order to maintain their coherency. In order to strengthen their significance and give them increasing weight, sports symbols frequently use strategies such as drawing upon religious or political symbolism. This provides a context in which the symbols may be read and easily understood – a towel as a flag, for instance, uses a symbol with a built-in set of understandings to give a shorthand reading of the new sporting symbol. Symbolism also frequently draws upon contextual markers that allow it to relate specifically to the communities using those symbols. The Green Bay Packer's fans using cheese, symbolic of the local industry, and the Steelers doing the same with recycled steel industry logos for the team tapped into a discourse which

already had a broad reaching set of economic and social connotations. Because of the continuity of some of the symbolism, there is also a sense of nostalgia that can come to be associated with the symbol. Through its stasis, it can be associated with glories, past or present, as well as the current team and even, potentially, the future of the team. This temporal flexibility inherent in the symbol increases its evocative power. While some may only associate the symbol with the team as they know it, for others it may be transformed into a symbol of the past and become a way to communicate the meaning and significance of the past.

### *Visualization*

One of the key ways in which sports draws upon these modes is through visualization. The ability to visualize other members of the group or to see aspects of place draws upon many other themes that emerge in the discussion of sports and community. The interplay between the public and the private, for example, is facilitated through visualization. It would be of more limited use to say that some people have rooms dedicated to the Steelers and that such rooms are evidence of their dedication to the team. It is stronger to show pictures of such rooms, to allow fans to visualize the extent and even excess with which other fans have reshaped their space. At an even high level than that would be something such as the "Whatever It Takes" museum exhibit, an invitation to step inside somebody else's room and explore their private space. This invitation can be extended because the team creates a gap for understanding the private as public – the room may be private, but the love of the team is public, something to be shown and shared. It does not take a museum to convey this understanding either; very

often, these rooms become social spaces where the game can be watched with other fans as part of a community, and where the dedication of the host towards the team can be demonstrated in spatial form.

Visualization is also what gives power to many of the symbols. The desire to visualize and display symbols is crucial to what makes a symbol. Yet while many symbols may be limited to being shown in particular times or particular places, sports integrates the symbolic into the everyday. Logos of teams appear on a wide range of everyday items, people may stick decals or signs of support on their car or in their yards, clothing is commonly worn, and other methods of display are routine. The symbol is not limited to the sports stadium nor the time limited to when the game is being played or even, in some circumstances, the football (or other sport) season. In certain cases, a symbol or set of symbols may even attempt to co-opt other symbols. The Terrible Towel is one particularly visual case of symbolism. The purpose of the Towel inside of the stadium is to be seen and to be seen in huge numbers. The comments that it might make the stadium look entirely yellow is one way in which the symbol 'conquers' the sporting space it enters into. However, it extends that reach beyond the stadium – pictures taken around the world and even in orbit around the world allow the symbol to visually move and represent the city and the fan community wherever the Towel goes. Here again, visualization is key – there is a desire to see the Towel elsewhere, beyond the stadium, signifying the reach of the community beyond the stadium or even the city as well.

Because the symbols are representative of the community, this visualization of symbols helps to stand in for the community as well. By spreading the symbol, there is the suggestion that the community is a community on a large scale. There is a tension here – the community cannot become too large lest it become meaningless, as it must always have outsiders and others against which it can measure itself. However, there is

also strength in numbers and the idea that the community is large and powerful is an appealing thought. The constant use of the symbol also suggests that the use of it (and, correspondingly, the associations with the team, city, and community) are the priority for the people who are using the symbol and signifying their allegiance. To show the Terrible Towel while in France – or to go even further and claim that showing off the Towel at locations in France was the reason for going there – demonstrates the centrality and importance of the team to a particular person with the suggestion that, through its approval of such visualizations and behaviors, that the community's priorities are much the same, with the city and team at the center.

While visualization can help to establish a sense of the team/city and its importance when outside of the city, it is equally important within it. The stadium experience is one defined by a complicated web of visualizations. On the most basic level, the purpose of going to the game is to spectate, to watch the team on the field. However, there are also many ways in which spectators watch one another. When the camera pans to view the audience, it may zero in on a small set of members who are then expected to look into the camera and react enthusiastically. Those broadcasting the game will often remark on the fans that are there, on the number of fans and their level of participation. And even for those fans that aren't ever shown on the screen, attending the game often has a necessarily component of visual display. At the most basic level, fans will show up in the colors of the team, to demonstrate which side they are cheering for and to shape the appearance of the space. However, many fans go much further. From wearing elaborate costumes in team colors to wearing little more than shorts and a lot of body paint, spectacle in football is acceptable and even encouraged. There is respect and admiration for the excess and the lengths to which some will go to demonstrate their affiliation to the team. This bodily show of team connection can even extend beyond the

limits of the stadium. One of the major parts of "Whatever It Takes" were the pictures that people took of their tattoos about the Steelers. In some senses, this was again an example of intimate sharing – some of the tattoos were in places that would not necessarily be seen, such as the back, where the person would have to take off his or her shirt for them to be shown. However, as with many tattoos, even if some would temporarily be covered, there is an aspect of community visualization inherent in tattoos, as they are meant to varying extents to be public and seen by others. While some of the excesses of stadium dress may not be considered appropriate for spaces outside of the stadium, clothing such as jerseys and tattoos which persistently demonstrate affiliation towards the team persist in other spaces.

***Economy***

Embedded in many of the understandings of sport are understandings of and tensions over economic discourses. Regarding symbols and visualization, for example, there are many ways in which symbols have been shaped into commodities which people are quite willing to spend on. However, there are also ways in which other substitutes being made – such as the lamps in the museum man-cave – serve as equally acceptable, predicated on the understanding that not wanting or not being able to spend money on the team need not limit passion for the team. To a certain extent, with certain teams, it may even highlight team affiliation – with the Steelers, because of the history of the city and the team, there is a prevailing view that the fans are "blue collar." Therefore, to engage in making one's own paraphernalia, from homemade household items to wearing cheaper, unlicensed t-shirts, is not seen as a transgression, though it goes outside of the economy

that the team and the NFL have set up and regulated. Instead, it may be viewed positively, as a marker of an economic condition common amongst fans. Othering is often done in terms of economy as well – again going back to the historical contrast with Dallas, the Steelers position themselves as the 'harder' team, more blue collar and 'tough.'

Economics can also produce a great deal of tension; when teams are unwilling to spend or invest in the team or when the team is spoken of as being an investment by the owners, rather than a passion, the logic is that bad decisions will frequently result. Such discourses imply that by attempting to understand the team in a purely economic sense, the team and the sport will never be truly understood and long-term success will remain elusive. Other economic tensions can abound, such as the cost of tickets – often seen in football and in other sports as pricing out the fans who give the most support. The current lingering lockout pitting wealthy players against wealthier owners can produce tension among fans who don't make nearly as much and disapproval of both players and owners might translate into distance from the team. And in cases like that of the Baltimore Colts, economic tensions can occasionally spill over into causing a separation of the team, serving as an unpleasant reminder of the realities of ownership and the ways in which the city and the team are *not* fully intertwined. The permeation of such tensions and their significance within the sport suggest that economic status is a precarious ground, a reality which sports must continually grapple with. Even as the blue collar is vaunted and a nostalgia for a blue collar past (that perhaps glosses over some of the realities of that past) is maintained and retained, football grows economically larger, and attempts to mitigate, manage and contain certain tensions continually occur.

***Spatial Hierarchy***

The spatial geography of the sports teams produces a number of spaces and, while many of these are complex and intersect with one another, a hierarchy emerges from them. Central to the sporting experience is the stadium, the locus of the sporting activity. Within the stadium there are hierarchies as well – it is more preferable to be closer to the field and the experience than it is to be higher up in the "nosebleed" sections. Those who have tickets closer to the field have likely made significant investments to be able to do so, again hearkening back to the economic dimensions of the sporting experience. The field itself occupies a special place, albeit one that few fans have consistent access to. Moving outward from the stadium, the city becomes a focal point as well. Nearly as central to the sporting experience as the stadium itself, the city can provide the context for a team. The particular cultures and traditions of the city often have impacts on the in-stadium experience – the types of food that are sold, the types of beer that are offered. These experiences, especially the ones particular to certain cities or areas have the potential to extend outward, to the parties that people have in their private homes or the bars where they go to watch games, such as the pierogies sold at the Steeler's bar in Fort Worth. The city's strong associations with the team build in an importance given to the city given support of the team.

Beyond the city, the experience of community is recognized as important. The spaces in which the community may gather may differ; however, an important understanding of sport is the idea that there is something valuable to be gained in mutual spectatorship. Even if this is facilitated through technology – watching on TV while talking about the game with others on a message board – the experience of being a part of the group, reacting and interacting with that group, lends something significant to the

experience. The presence of clubs which facilitate watching games with one another has an economic bent to it – in areas which do not get the games for free, it is cheaper if the cost is spread across many people. Yet even in areas where the games are broadcast to the general public, viewing groups often congregate. Sporting is seen as a communal experience and the stadium exemplifies that. Therefore, other spaces which attempt to recreate the stadium experience – viewing the game with others while engaging in particular types of behaviors – gain value.

At an even broader, though perhaps less explicitly experiential level, there is an importance attached to the breadth of the community. The size of the community can have a legitimizing effect, particularly in sports, since it serves as a form of recognition that the belief in the team isn't exclusive. The size of a fan community can possess internal tensions, such as worries over 'bandwagon' fans – those who claim affiliation in times of success but then leave when the team does not perform as well. However, overall size is of some importance as it can be interpreted as one measure of a team's success. There may be practical implications; within the stadium, for instance, if one group of fans vastly outnumbers the other it can contribute to a different dynamic in terms of noise, audience support, and so forth. When seeking other fans to meet at bars, a critical mass is also necessary to form a club large enough to meet and take over that space as well. A larger fan presence may also be suggestive of loyalty – a wide-spread, large fanbase may also be interpreted to mean that those who left a city carried their fanship with them and did not transfer it to the new city, implying that the hold between the team and the fan was strong enough that geographic distance did not break it. The team and the city of the team still possess a central place in the fan experience and the size of a fanbase can be critical in terms of both stadium and outside experiences.

***Nostalgia***

Beyond the spatial, there is also a temporal element which contributes to the construction of sports communities and the places with which such communities identify. Sports often places a high premium on the past – past glories are frequently discussed, whether as part of sporting arguments about superiority or for the nostalgic enjoyment of recalling the past. Past methods of playing are also a common trope involved in sports, the clichéd idea of a time when "men were men" and the game was seen as being less regulated, with an implication of it being likewise more masculine. There may be economic tensions bound up in this as well. The past was a time when players were often paid less, or perhaps not paid at all, and for sports fans this may represent a type of pre-consumer fantasy, back when the game was "pure" and less bound up in concerns of profit.

However, there are also ways in which the city, not just the team, figures into the nostalgia Because of the economic connotations that the team can carry, cheering for the team may also represent a nostalgia for a particular time. When the city was bound to a particular economy or figure itself in particular ways. Because the team may be perceived as stable, it can then shoulder that nostalgic burden and serve as a way of holding on to the idea of the city as it used to be, rather than as it actually might be. Such nostalgic burdens come with risks, however; as in the base of Baltimore, if the city-team relationship becomes disrupted or falls apart, it can cause civic anxiety as well, since one representation of the city has been damaged.

Nostalgia, as it relates to both team and city, can be conveyed in a number of ways and on a number of levels. Some forms may be very personal – fan to fan reminiscing about experiences at games, for instance. However, these personal experiences may also translate to larger scales. Blogs may relate a personal experience to

a larger group of internet fans. Sportscasting often uses reminiscent experiences to contextualize the game and the performances happening. The team may use such nostalgia as a way to market and commodify such experiences. Thus, the nostalgic experience of the sports team can translate to the idea of community on multiple levels, depending on the media through which it is expressed. Though less explicitly geographic than other methods of construction community, this reiteration of nostalgia serves to activate an awareness of community and strengthen an idea of shared history. This is not to eliminate geographic possibility either; reminiscing over a city of place can fix a particularly imagined geographic image in the minds of those discussing it.

***Interactivity***

Fundamental to the sporting experience is the idea of participation. This emphasis on the necessity of involvement plays itself out in particular ways, especially when considering how it can shape community and space. Participation is a method of articulating identity and demonstrating that identity to others. Clothing, for instance, is a participatory market; while others may see outfits or costumes as outlandish, within the fan community they are an approved of sign of involvement and loyalty.

Within particular spaces, participation becomes even more essential. The stadium becomes an important locus of participation and performance, where a failure to act is construed quite negatively. Though the initial purpose of the stadium seems to be to give those within a place to spectate and view the players, this relationship is multi-dimensional – through television cameras and Jumbotrons in the stadium, those who are watching are likewise watched. There is an implication that the watchers ought to also be

performing; if the cameras fix on a person or group, they are expected to act for the cameras, to shout or wave. On a larger scale, the audience is expected to be both present and active. Frequently, broadcasters will remark on the participatory state of the audience. If the fans of one team have an usual share of the audience or are being particularly noisy, this is normally mentioned in a positive way as it demonstrates the support and loyalty towards the team that the community values. If the audience is 'bad' – if they do not fill the stands, if they are not loud, if they leave early – the fans are criticized, with commentators sometimes implying that the poor performance of a team may be attributable to the lackluster efforts of its supporters.

There are also behaviors which are more contextual, which may fall between the two poles of lauding and criticism. Fans who boo, for example, may be seen negatively if the team is overall a strong and performing well. However, if the team has not won in a long while, they may be seen as derelict in their duties towards their fans and the booing may be considered deserved. Similarly, fans who are rowdy or unruly may be interpreted different ways, by different teams or in different places. For some teams or cities, breaks in decorum such as throwing objects, using profanity, or being overly aggressive towards the opponents may be seen as improper or damaging. For other teams, it might be encouraged as a show of masculinity and enthusiasm. Approval or disapproval depends on community context as well – what is alright for the home team might be criticized in the away team. Yet regardless of how it is perceived, participation and performance are crucial elements to the sporting experience that are remarked upon and that shape the space around them.

Interactivity outside of the stadium is also an important element. In watching the game with others, reaction is expected. Even if the interaction shifts away from the physical, it is nevertheless considered important – posting in a live thread where reactions

to what's happening on the field are posted in real time, for example, rather than limiting the interaction to post-game discussion or reflection. Beyond that, the museum exhibits also demonstrate an impulse towards interaction, offering particular exhibits where one might imagine themselves as a player or part of the band. These interactions once again reiterate the hierarchy of the sporting spaces. By offering the ability to mimic the actions of those on the field, they make clear the centrality of the playing field and the desire to move in from the periphery of observation to the centrality of action.

***Summation***

Sports plays a significant social role and provides a multitude of connections between the fans of the sport and the city itself. In America, football in particular has taken on a socially powerful and economically substantial role in shaping popular understandings of cities and social identities. Though these connections between teams, cities, and fans are often figured positively, many times they are fraught with tensions about issues such as socio-economic status and masculinity. By drawing upon nostalgic perceptions of cities and teams in order to construct positive rhetorical identities, fan communities attempt to mitigate and relieve such anxieties; yet they continually persist. Nevertheless, the ways in which such attempts at mitigation operate are important to understand. American football is rhetorically constructed through a complex series of fantasies about place and community, with certain values and hierarchies of space central to those fantasies. Such rhetoric in turn shapes the way that spaces and places are understood and performed, with fans shaping the spaces around them and attempting to claim spaces as their own in response to the deep attachments felt towards the team and the community. What results is a complex network of influences that create a sporting

landscape for those who belong to the community to indulge in a nostalgia of place perpetually created and recreated. Analysis of how this network is created – through material culture, through media, through the repetition of certain fantasy themes – reveals how deeply geography is implicated and how necessary space and place are to the understanding of sport and the production of sporting fandom and fervor.

# Bibliography


Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 2006.

Andrews, David L. "The Fact(s) of Michael Jordan's Blackness: Excavating a Floating Racial Signifier." *Sociology of Sport* 13.2 (1996): 125-58.

Associated Press. "Steelers Fans Stockpile Terrible Towels for Super Bowl." *ESPN.com*. 31 Jan. 2006. <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/wire?section=nfl&id=2313092>.

Baker, William J. *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2007.

Bale, John. "Cartographic Fetishism to Geographical Humanism: Some Central Features of a Geography of Sports." *Innovation in Social Sciences Research* 5.4 (1992): 71-88.

*The Band That Wouldn't Die*. Dir. Barry Levinson. ESPN Films: 30 for 30, 2010.

Bauer, M. W., and B. Aarts. "Corpus Construction: a Principle for Qualitative Data Collection." *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound: a Practical Handbook*. Ed. Martin W. Bauer and George Gaskell. London: SAGE, 2000. 19-37.

Berry, Bonnie, and Earl Smith. "Race, Sport, and Crime: The Misrepresentation of African Americans in Team Sports and Crime." *Sociology of Sport* 17.2 (2000): 171-97.

Bigler, Matthew, and Judson L. Jeffries. ""An Amazing Specimin": NFL Draft Experts' Evaluations of Black Quarterbacks." *Journal of African American Studies* 12 (2008): 120-41.

Birrell, Susan. "Sport as Ritual: Interpretations from Durkheim to Goffman." *Social Forces* 60.2 (1981): 354-76.

Bormann, Ernest G. *The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1985.

Bradley, Josh. "Steelers = Blue Collar "Class" Or…." Weblog post. *Lone Star Struck*. 22 Feb. 2009. <http://lonestarstruck.com/2009/02/steelers-blue-collar-class-or.html>.

Branch, John. "For Terrible Towels, a Wonderful Legacy." *The New York Times* 30 Jan. 2009. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/30/sports/football/30towel.html>.

Brown, Oliver. "Super Bowl LXV: Forget Pom-poms, Pittsburgh Steelers v Green By Packers Is as Blue-collar as They Come - Telegraph." *Telegraph.co.uk - Telegraph Online, Daily Telegraph and Sunday Telegraph - Telegraph*. The Telegraph, 4 Feb. 2011. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/sport/othersports/americanfootball/8305421/Super-Bowl-LXV-forget-pom-poms-Pittsburgh-Steelers-v-Green-By-Packers-is-as-blue-collar-as-they-come.html>.

Brubach, Holly. "Gridiron City." *The New York Times* 4 Feb. 2006, Op-Ed sec. <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/04/opinion/04brubach.html>.

Brubaker, Rogers. "The 'diaspora' Diaspora." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28.1 (2005): 1-19.

Bryant, Jennings, Dolf Zillmann, and Arthur A. Raney. "Violence and the Enjoyment of Media Sports." *Mediasport*. Ed. Lawrence A. Wenner. London: Routledge, 1998. 252-65.

Buffington, Daniel. "Contesting Race on Sundays: Making Meaning out of the Rise in the Number of Black Quarterbacks." *Sociology of Sport Journal* 21 (2005): 19-37.

Burd, Gene. "Mediated Sports, Mayors and the Marketed Metropolis." *Sporting Dystopias: the Making and Meaning of Urban Sport Cultures*. Ed. Ralph C. Wilcox. Albany: State University of New York, 2003. 35-64.

"BYOPPT on Vimeo." *Vimeo, Video Sharing For You*. 2008. <http://vimeo.com/album/46664>.

Carrington, Ben. "Merely Identity: Cultural Identity and the Politics of Sport." *Sociology of Sport* 24.1 (2007): 49-66.

Chase, Chris. "Troy Polamalu Thinks Roger Goodell Has Too Much Power." *Shutdown Corner - NFL Blog - Yahoo! Sports*. Yahoo, 4 Nov. 2010. <http://sports.yahoo.com/nfl/blog/shutdown_corner/post/Troy-Polamalu-thinks-Roger-Goodell-has-too-much-?urn=nfl-282580>.

Connell, John, and Chris Gibson. *Sound Tracks: Popular Music, Identity, and Place*. London: Routledge, 2003.

Cope, Myron. *Myron Cope: Double Yoi! : a Revealing Memoir by the Broadcaster/writer*. Champaign, Ill.: Sports Pub., 2002.

Cope, Myron. "Pittsburgh Steelers | Terrible Towel." *Official Site of the Pittsburgh Steelers*. Web. <http://www.steelers.com/history/terrible-towel.html>.

Cope, Myron. "True Tales of the Terrible Towel." *Sports Illustrated* 30 July 1979. <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/vault/article/magazine/MAG1095195/index.htm>.

Davis, Laurel R., and Othello Harris. "Race and Ethnicity in US Sports Media." *Mediasport*. Ed. Lawrence A. Wenner. London: Routledge, 1998. 154-69.

Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life.* Trans. Joseph W. Swain. New York: Free, 1965.

Dvorchak, Robert. "NFL's Plans to Introduce Trophy Towel Draw Cries That It's a Ripoff." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 18 Jan. 2009. Web. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09018/942668-66.stm>.

Dvorchak, Robert. "Steelers Nation Invades Arrowhead Stadium." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 23 Nov. 2009. Web. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09327/1015653-66.stm>.

Dvorchak, Robert. "The 'Terrible Towel' That Changes Lives." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 30 Aug. 2009. Web. <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09242/994215-66.stm>.

Eitzen, D. Stanley. "Names, Logos, Mascots and Flags: The Contradictory Uses of Sports Symbols." *Fair and Foul: beyond the Myths and Paradoxes of Sport*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009. 41-57.

*Encyclopedia Destructica*. <http://www.encyclopediadestructica.com/>.

Euchner, Charles C. *Playing the Field: Why Sports Teams Move and Cities Fight to Keep Them*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994.

Evans, Rhonda, DeAnn K. Gauthier, and Craig J. Forsyth. "Dogfighting: Symbolic Expression and Validation of Masculinity." *Sex Roles* 39.11/12 (1998): 825-38.

Evans, Jr., Arthur S. "Blacks as Key Functionaries: A Study of the Racial Stratification in Professional Sport." *Journal of Black Studies* 28.1 (1997): 43-59.

Ferriter, Meghan M. ""Arguably the Greatest": Sport Fans and Communities at Work on Wikipedia." *Sociology of Sport* 26.1 (2009): 127-54.

Fleming, David. "Skeletons Hiding in Steelers' Closet." *ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports: Page 2*. ESPN, 27 Jan. 2011. <http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/page2/story?page=fleming/110127>.

Fu, Freddie H. "Presidential Address of the American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine Credibility, Integrity, and the "Terrible Towel"" *The American Journal of Sports Medicine* 37.12: 2309-313.

Gaffney, Chris, and John Bale. "Sensing the Stadium." *Sites of Sport: Space, Place, Experience*. By Patricia Anne Vertinsky and John Bale. London: Routledge, 2004. 25-38.

Gantz, Walter, and Lawrence A. Wenner. "Fanship and the Television Sports Viewing Experience." *Sociology of Sport* 12.1 (1995): 56-74.

Garber, Greg. "'Terrible' Influence Yields Good Results." *ESPN.com*. 29 Jan. 2009. <http://sports.espn.go.com/nfl/playoffs2008/columns/story?columnist=garber_greg&page=hotread20/garber>.

Gay, Timothy J. *The Physics of Football: Discover the Science of Bone-crunching Hits, Soaring Field Goals, and Awe-inspiring Passes*. New York: Harper, 2005.

Gigler, Dan. "Seahawks Fans Just Won't Let It Go ..." Web log post. *Blog 'n' Gold*. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 14 Jan. 2011. <http://blogs.sites.post-gazette.com/index.php/sports/blog-n-gold/24481-seahawks-fans-just-wont-let-it-go->.

Gildea, William. *When the Colts Belonged to Baltimore: a Father and a Son, a Team and a Time*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1996

Giulianotti, Richard. "Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs: A Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 26.1 (2002): 25-46.

Graham, Allison. *Framing the South Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle*. New York: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003.

Gruneau, Richard S. *Class, Sports, and Social Development*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 1999.

Hartmann, Douglas. "Rush Limbaugh, Donovan McNabb, and "A Little Social Concern": Reflections on the Problems of Whiteness in Contemporary American Sport." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 31.1 (2007): 45-60.

Hornaday, Ann. "Colts Left Town, but Film Salutes the Band That Played On." *Washington Post*. 8 Oct. 2009.

Hughson, John, and Marcus Free. "Paul Willis, Cultural Commodities, and Collective Sport Fandom." *Sociology of Sport* 23.1 (2006): 72-85.

Hylton, Kevin. *Critical Race Theory in Sport*. New York: Routledge, 2008.

Iedema, Rick. "Analysing Film and Television: a Social Semiotic Account of Hospital: an Unhealthy Business." *Handbook of Visual Analysis*. Ed. Leeuwen Theo Van and Carey Jewitt. London: SAGE, 2001. 183-206.

Ingham, Alan G., and Mary G. McDonald. "Sport and Community/Communitas." *Sporting Dystopias: the Making and Meaning of Urban Sport Cultures*. Ed. Ralph C. Wilcox. Albany: State University of New York, 2003. 17-33.

Jeffries, Hasan K. "Fields of Play: The Mediums through Which Black Athletes Engaged in Sports in Jim Crow Georgia." *The Journal of Negro History* 86.3 (2001): 264-75.

Joey Porter's Pit Bulls. "Re: The Terrible Towel Is Out of This World." Weblog comment. *Joey Porter's Pit Bulls*. 23 Jan. 2009. Web. <http://joeyporterspitbulls.blogspot.com/2009_01_23_archive.html>.

Johnson, Arthur T. "Municipal Administration and the Sports Franchise Relocation Issue." *Public Administration Review* 43.6 (1983): 519-28.

Johnstone, Barbara. "Pittsburghese Shirts: Commodification and the Enregisterment of an Urban Dialect." *American Speech* 84.2 (2009): 157-75.

Johnstone, Barbara, and Dan Baumgardt. ""Pittsburghese" Online: Vernacular Norming in Conversation." *American Speech* 79.2 (2004): 115-45.

Jones, Katharine W. "Female Fandom: Identity, Sexism and Men's Professional Football in England." *Sociology of Sport* 25.4 (2008): 516-37.

King, Anthony. "The Postmodernity of Football Hooliganism." *The British Journal of Sociology* 48.4 (1997): 576-93.

King, C. R., Laurel Davis-Delano, Ellen Staurowsky, and Lawrence Baca. "Sports Mascots and the Media." *Handbook of Sports and Media*. Ed. Arthur A. Raney and Jennings Bryant. Mahwah, N.J.: L. Erlbaum Associates, 2006. 559-75.

Kraszewski, Jon. "Pittsburgh in Fort Worth: Football Bars, Sports Television, Sports Fandom, and the Management of Home." *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* 32.2 (2008): 139-57.

Laberge, Suzanne. "Toward an Integration of Gender Ino Bourdieu's Concept of Cultural Capital." *Sociology of Sport* 12.2 (1995): 132-46.

Liguori, Ann. "The Blue Collar Bowl." *CBS New York*. CBS, 3 Feb. 2011. <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2011/02/03/liguori-the-blue-collar-bowl/>.

Lindquist, Danille C. ""Locating" the Nation: Football Game Day and American Dreams in Central Ohio." *Journal of American Folklore* 119 (2006): 444-88.

Longman, Jere. *If Football's a Religion, Why Don't We Have a Prayer?: Philadelphia, Its Faithful, and the Eternal Quest for Sports Salvation*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

Lori. "Re: The Terrible Towel Is Out of This World." Weblog comment. *Joey Porter's Pit Bulls*. 23 Jan. 2009. <http://joeyporterspitbulls.blogspot.com/2009/01/terrible-towel-is-out-of-this-world.html>.

Maggin, Alice. "Terrible Towel Creator Donates All to Disabled." *ABC News*. 6 Feb. 2009. <http://abcnews.go.com/WN/PersonOfWeek/story?id=6821185&page=1>.

Mautner, Gerlinde. "Analyzing Newspapers, Magazines, and Other Print Media." *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Ed. Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyżanowski. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 30-53.

McBride, James. "Symptomatic Expression of Male Neurosis: Collective Effervescence, Male Gender Performance, and the Ritual of Football." *God in the Details: American Religion in Popular Culture*. By Eric Michael. Mazur and Kate McCarthy. New York: Routledge, 2001. 123-38.

McCollester, Charles. "The Glory and the Gutting: Steeler Nation and the Humiliation of Pittsburgh." *Monthly Review* 57.7 (2005): 30-41.

McLaughlin, Eliott C. "Packers, Steelers Steeped in Success, Blue-collar Roots - CNN." *Featured Articles from CNN*. CNN, 04 Feb. 2011. <http://articles.cnn.com/2011-

02-04/us/super.bowl.blue.collar.roots_1_steelers-fan-max-starks-troy-polamalu?_s=PM:US>.

Mehno, John. *The Best Pittsburgh Sports Arguments: the 100 Most Controversial, Debatable Questions for Die-hard Fans*. Naperville, Ill.: Source, 2007.

Menjivar, Cecilia, and Sang H. Kil. "For Their Own Good: Benevolent Rhetoric and Exclusionary Language in Public Officials' Discourse on Immigrant-Related Issues." *Social Justice* 29.1-2 (2002): 160-76.

Millman, Chad. "Steelers Are America's Real Team." *ESPN: The Worldwide Leader In Sports*. 31 Jan. 2011. <http://sports.espn.go.com/nfl/playoffs/2010/columns/story?columnist=millman_chad>.

Millman, Chad, and Shawn T. Coyne. *The Ones Who Hit the Hardest: the Steelers, the Cowboys, the '70s, and the Fight for America's Soul*. New York: Gotham, 2010.

Mizruchi, Mark S. "Local Sports Teams and Celebration of Community: A Comparative Analysis of the Home Advantage." *The Sociological Quarterly* 26.4 (1985): 507-18.

Montanez, Virginia. "This Proves Steelers Fancaves Are Everywhere, Literally." *Pittsburgh Magazine*. June 2011. Web. <http://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/Best-of-the-Burgh-Blogs/Pitt-Girl/June-2011/The-Best-Little-Steelers-House-in-Texas/>.

Moses, Michael. "Terrible Towel Tour Ft. Michael Moses." *Photo Albums by Michaelmoses*. <http://michaelmoses.jalbum.net/The-Towel/>.

Murphy, Austin. "Though the Colts Bolted For Indy, The Band Marches On In Baltimore." *Sports Illustrated* 29 Sept. 1986: 12-14.

Nephin, Dan, and Associated Press. "Terrible Towel: Steelers Fans' Unofficial Flag." 30 Jan. 2009. <http://www.rockymountainnews.com/news/2009/jan/30/terrible-towel-steeler-nations-unofficial-flag/>.

*NFL Videos: Top 10 Controversial Calls*. *NFL.com - Official Site of the National Football League*. 3 June 2010. <http://www.nfl.com/videos/nfl-network-total-access/09000d5d8187af4c/Top-10-controversial-calls>.

Nicholson, Matthew, and Russell Hoye, eds. *Sport and Social Capital*. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2008.

Niven, David. "Race, Quarterbacks and the Media: Testing the Rush Limbaugh Hypothesis." *Journal of Black Studies* 35.5 (2005): 684-94.

Oates, Thomas P. "New Media and the Repackaging of NFL Fandom." *Sociology of Sport* 26.1 (2009): 31-49.

Olesker, Michael. *The Colts' Baltimore: a City and Its Love Affair in the 1950s*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2008.

Paige, Woody. "Whose Stadium Is This Anyway?" *The Denver Post*. 10 Nov. 2009. <http://www.denverpost.com/premium/broncos/ci_13752175>.

Palmer, Catherine. "Outside the Imagined Community: Basque Terrorism, Political Activism, and the Tour De France." *Sociology of Sport* 18.2 (2001): 143-61.

Palmer, Catherine, and Kirrilly Thompson. "The Paradoxes of Football Spectatorship: On-Field and Online Expressions of Social Capital Among the "Grog Squad"" *Sociology of Sport* 24.2 (2007): 187-205.

Patterson, Ted. *Football in Baltimore: History and Memorabilia*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000.

Pollak, Alexander. "Analyzing TV Documentaries." *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*. Ed. Ruth Wodak and Michał Krzyżanowski. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire [England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 77-95.

Poulton, Emma. "Toward a Cultural Sociology of the Consumption of "Fantasy Football Hooliganism"" *Sociology of Sport* 25.3 (2008): 331-49.

Prebish, Charles S. *Religion and Sport: the Meeting of Sacred and Profane*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1993.

Price, Joseph L. "The Super Bowl as Religious Festival." *From Season to Season: Sports as American Religion*. Ed. Joseph L. Price. Macon, Ga.: Mercer UP, 2001. 137-40.

Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000.

Rail, Genevieve, and Jean Harvey. "Body at Work: Michel Foucault and the Sociology of Sport." *Sociology of Sport* 12.2 (1995): 164-79.

Robson, Garry. *"No One Likes Us, We Don't Care": The Myth and Reality of Millwall Fandom*. Oxford: Berg, 2000.

Ross, Charles K., ed. *Race and Sport The Struggle for Equality on and Off the Field (Chancellor Porter L. Fortune Symposium in Southern History S)*. New York: University of Mississippi, 2004.

Sabo, Don, and Sue C. Jansen. "Prometheus Unbound: Constructions of Masculinity in Sports Media." *Mediasport*. Ed. Lawrence A. Wenner. London: Routledge, 1998. 202-17.

Safran, William. "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora* 1.1 (1991): 83-99.

Sage, George H. "Patriotic Images and Capitalist Profit: Contradictions of Professional Team Sports Licensed Merchandise." *Sociology of Sport* 13.1 (1996): 1-11.

Scherer, Jay, and Steven J. Jackson. "Producing Allblacks.com: Cultural Intermediaries and the Policing of Electronic Spaces of Sporting Consumption." *Sociology of Sport* 25.2 (2008): 187-205.

Shanafelt, Robert. "The Nature of Flag Power: How Flags Entail Dominance, Subordination and Social Solidarity." *Politics and the Life Sciences* 27.2 (2009): 13-27.

Singer, John N. "Understanding Racism through the Eyes of African American Male Student-athletes." *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 8.4 (2005): 365-86.

Smith, Jason M., and Alan G. Ingham. "On the Waterfront: Retrospectives on the Relationship Between Sport and Communities." *Sociology of Sport* 20.3 (2003): 252-74.

*Socio-Economic Underpinnings of Steeler Nation*. Dir. Christopher Smalley. Perf. Adam Atkinson. 2010. DVD.

St. Antoine, Thomas J., Matthew T. Althouse, and Moya A. Ball. "Fantasy-Theme Criticism." *Rhetorical Criticism: Perspectives in Action*. By Jim A. Kuypers. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2009. 205-30.

Steinberg, Dan. "Redskins to Copy Terrible Towels." *The Washington Post* 10 Nov. 2008. <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/dcsportsbog/2008/11/redskins_to_copy_terrible_towe.html>.

*Steeler Fans From The Womb*. *NBC Chicago*. NBC, 29 Jan. 2009. <http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/sports/Steeler_Fans_From_The_Womb_Los_Angeles.html>

*Steeler Nation*. 2009. Web. <http://www.nfl.com/videos/nfl-network-gameday/09000d5d80e7ff16/Steeler-nation>.

*Steelers Nation*. NFL Films Presents, 2006.

Strong, Pauline T. "The Mascot Slot: Cultural Citizenship, Political Correctness, and Pseudo-Indian Sports Symbols." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 28.1 (2004): 79-87.

Till, Karen E. "Reimagining National Identity." *Textures of Place: Exploring Humanist Geographies*. Ed. Paul C. Adams and Steven D. Hoelscher. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001. 273-99.

Trujillo, Nick. "Machines, Missiles, and Men: Images of the Male Body on ABC's Monday Night Football." *Sociology of Sport* 12.4 (1995): 403-23.

Ugolini, Joel M. "Even a Violent Game Has Its Limits: A Look at the NFL's Responsibility for the Behavior of Its Players." *University of Toledo Law Review* 39.Fall (2007): 41-58.

Vamplew, Wray. "Facts and Artefacts: Sports Historians and Sports Museums." *Journal of Sports History* 25.2 (1998): 268-82.

Vigna, Paul. "NFL Siphons Terrible Towel Idea for New Product." *The Patriot-News*. 19 Jan. 2009. <http://blog.pennlive.com/fanbox/2009/01/nfl_siphons_terrible_towel_ide.html>.

Vosburg, Matthew D. "From ‘Aints’ to Saints : a Rhetorical Analysis of the New Orleans Saints’ Fan Community." Thesis. Oregon State University, 2008.

Walker, James. "Flash Points: Franchise-turning Events." *NFL Nation Blog*. ESPN, 18 May 2011. <http://sports.espn.go.com/blog/nflnation/post/_/id/40621/flash-points-franchise-turning-events-2>.

Walsh, Adrian J., and Richard Giulianotti. *Ethics, Money and Sport: This Sporting Mammon*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Wann, Daniel L., Merrill J. Melnick, Gordon W. Russell, and Dale G. Pease. *Sport Fans: the Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators*. New York: Routledge, 2001.

Watts, Rebecca B. "The Florida Gator Nation Online." *Sports Mania: Essays on Fandom and the Media in the 21st Century*. Ed. Lawrence W. Hugenberg, Paul M. Haridakis, and Adam C. Earnheardt. Jefferson: McFarland &, 2008. 243-56.

Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum. *Relive a Few Classic Battles*. Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum. <http://www.heinzhistorycenter.org/uploads/Media/21_HistoryCenter_brochure.pdf>.

Whannel, Garry. *Media Sport Stars: Masculinities and Moralities*. London: Routledge, 2002.

Whannel, Garry. "Sports Stars, Narrativization and Masculinities." *Leisure Studies* 18.3 (1999): 249-65.

Whannel, Garry. *Fields in Vision: Television Sport and Cultural Transformation*. London: Routledge, 1992.